

Charles University  
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# Dissertation

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## **A WASTED OPPORTUNITY?**

### **THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP AND CHINESE REFORMS, 1978–1991**

PROMARNĚNÁ PŘÍLEŽITOST?

SOVĚTSKÉ VEDENÍ A ČÍNSKÉ REFORMY, 1978–1991

Supervisor: Prof. PhDr. Václav Horčíčka, Ph.D.

2024

I hereby declare that I have written this dissertation independently, using only the mentioned and duly cited sources and literature, and that the work has not been used in another university study programme or to obtain the same or another academic title.

In Prague on March 13, 2024

PhDr. Ladislav Zemánek

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## Abstract

The dissertation addresses Soviet reforms after 1978 in light of a parallel reform process in China and links between the Soviet political leadership and Dengism. The author focuses on the applicability and implementation of the Chinese reform model in the Soviet Union in terms of socioeconomic factors, the role of China in Soviet policy choices and decision making, discursive factors, and practical reform policies. The analysis results in an explanation of the dismissal of the Chinese reform model by Soviet leaders at the discursive, institutional, and political levels. The research is embedded in a constructivist framework, combining a number of theoretical paradigms, including but not limited to poststructuralism, discourse theories, and historical sociology. An original typology of Soviet political discourses is used as a main analytical method, defining neo-Stalinism, neo-Leninism, and liberal socialism as hegemonic discourses in 1978–1991. The study draws on archival materials, memoirs, diaries, and speeches of relevant actors, official documents, as well as extensive secondary literature.

The author argues that socioeconomic differences between the two countries did not necessarily hinder the application of Dengism in the Soviet Union. China is identified with a “significant other” and the 1985–1989 period with the most favourable moment for the adoption of the Chinese reform model in terms of Soviet perceptions of China and bilateral relations. Neo-Leninism proved to be compatible with Dengism in all main respects, and hence discursive factors enabled the Communist Party to implement the Chinese reform model as well. The latter was implemented in the country from 1983 to 1988 and neo-Leninism as the Soviet parallel of Dengism remained politically relevant up to the coup in August 1991. An important factor in the abandonment of the Chinese reform path is seen in Gorbachev’s turn to liberal socialism, his “strategic ambiguity” and aversion to the use of force amid the rise of nationalism and populism, as well as in the institutional design of the Soviet state with the strong general secretary (president) and a weak government. The dissertation concludes that the dismissal of Dengism by the Soviet leadership is one of the principal causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## Keywords

China, constructivism, Deng Xiaoping, discourse analysis, liberal socialism, Mikhail Gorbachev, neo-Leninism, neo-Stalinism, Nikolai Ryzhkov, perestroika, reforms, socialism, Soviet Union

## Abstrakt

Dizertační práce se zabývá sovětskými reformami po roce 1978 ve světle paralelního reformního procesu v Číně a vazbami mezi sovětským politickým vedením a dengismem. Autor se zaměřuje na aplikovatelnost a implementaci čínského reformního modelu v Sovětském svazu z hlediska socioekonomických faktorů, role Číny v sovětských politikách a rozhodování, diskurzivních faktorů a praktických reformních politik. Analýza vede k vysvětlení odmítnutí čínského reformního modelu ze strany sovětských lídrů na diskurzivní, institucionální a politické úrovni. Výzkum je zasazen do konstruktivistického rámce, který kombinuje řadu teoretických paradigmat včetně poststrukturalismu, teorií diskurzu a historické sociologie. Dizertační práce aplikuje originální typologii sovětských politických diskurzů jako svou hlavní analytickou metodu a definuje neostalinismus, neoleninismus a liberální socialismus jako hegemonické diskurzy v letech 1978–1991. Studie čerpá z archivních materiálů, memoárů, deníků a projevů relevantních aktérů, oficiálních dokumentů i rozsáhlé sekundární literatury.

Autor argumentuje, že socioekonomické rozdíly mezi oběma zeměmi nutně nebránily aplikaci dengismu v Sovětském svazu. Čína je identifikována jako „významný druhý“ a roky 1985–1989 jako nejpříznivější období pro přijetí čínského reformního modelu z hlediska sovětského vnímání Číny a bilaterálních vztahů. Neoleninismus se ukázal být slučitelný s dengismem ve všech hlavních ohledech, tudíž i diskurzivní faktory umožnily komunistické straně čínský reformní model implementovat. Ten byl v zemi v letech 1983 až 1988 skutečně aplikován a neoleninismus jako sovětská paralela dengismu zůstal politicky relevantní až do převratu v srpnu 1991. Důležitý faktor v opuštění čínské reformní cesty je spatřován v Gorbačovově příklonu k liberálnímu socialismu, jeho „strategické nejednoznačnosti“ a averzi k použití síly tváří v tvář sílícímu nacionalismu a populismu, jakož i v institucionálním nastavení sovětského státu se silným generálním tajemníkem (prezidentem) a slabou vládou. Práce dochází k závěru, že odmítnutí dengismu ze strany sovětského vedení je jednou z hlavních příčin kolapsu Sovětského svazu.

## Klíčová slova

Čína, diskurzivní analýza, konstruktivismus, liberální socialismus, Michail Gorbačov, neoleninismus, neostalinismus, Nikolaj Ryžkov, perestrojka, reformy, socialismus, Sovětský svaz, Teng Siao-pching

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# 1 Introduction

Relations between the Soviet Union and China were exposed to a series of turnabouts during the Cold War, which affected the character of this grand confrontation of the second half of the twentieth century considerably. An increasing attention is paid to the role of the Asian country in the Cold War as well as the competition between Moscow and Beijing over the Third World. It turns out that China played an important part in the Soviet “overstretch” and consequent economic decline as a confrontation (or coexistence) with Western countries.

However, this dissertation does not investigate international politics and the complex Sino-Soviet relationship on their own. The goal is different. It aims to inquire into the links between Soviet political leadership and the Chinese reform model (“Dengism”), attitudes towards the new model of socialism on the part of Moscow’s leaders and the applicability of Dengism in the Soviet Union itself. Were there opportunities for the Soviets to follow the Chinese path and implement the Chinese reform model in the country? Were any political actors in favour of such a way? Did Soviet leaders implement Dengism at any moment of the reform process? And why did Moscow eventually dismiss the Chinese model? These questions delimit the thematic scope of my research.

## 1.1 Research goals and design

This “landscape” is underresearched for the simple reason that scholars have tended primarily to focus on the relations between the Soviet Union and the West. It is commonplace in both academic and political discourse that perestroika was a “march to the West”. My goal is to provide readers with a more nuanced interpretation and to take account of Dengism and its role in Soviet reform processes. Despite a wealth of literature on perestroika, the China factor in the developments in the Soviet Union since the inception of “reform and opening up” in the Asian country has generally been neglected. However, it is worth researching even more so that the outcome of reforms in both countries was the opposite.

More than three decades have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The recent demise of some of the most prominent figures in that historical drama motivates me to look back at the events and seek a fresh perspective free from bias produced by immediate experience with the end of the Cold War, related euphoria, and as well as the “cult of personality” of the last Soviet

leader.<sup>1</sup> The ongoing tragic conflict in eastern Europe makes me think about the heritage of the fall of the Soviet Union and political decisions made by actors such as Iurii Andropov, Mikhail Gorbachev, Egor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Valentin Pavlov, Aleksandr Iakovlev, and Eduard Shevardnadze, to mention just a few. The accelerating rapprochement and strategic partnership between Russia and China, in turn, is a sequel to the Sino-Soviet relations and builds on previous experiences and the common, however contradictory past.<sup>2</sup> That is why research into interactions between Moscow and Beijing and different aspects of mutual influence is of utter relevance today.

The dissertation is primarily focused on Soviet realities. The Chinese context constitutes a background against which the Soviet side is analysed. In other words, the dissertation is not a full-fledged comparison of Soviet and Chinese reforms. Chinese affairs are addressed to the extent necessary for research purposes. It applies first and foremost to the socioeconomic differences between both countries, bilateral relations, and the development of Chinese socialism. The key is to define Dengism in order to find the affinities with and differences between the Chinese and Soviet reform models. But the Soviet milieu is what matters above all. This choice led me to specific research questions, methods, and use of primary as well as secondary sources. My research is essentially qualitative and embedded in a constructivist and poststructuralist theoretical foundation. It combines a number of paradigms but subsumes them within a common theoretical framework based on ontological relativism and perspectivism.<sup>3</sup> The application of discourse theory enables me to formulate an original typology of Soviet political discourses as the central analytical method. In the upshot, a multilayered, polyperspective research into the problematique enables me to formulate an explanation of the links between the Soviet leadership and Dengism.

The working procedure is nonlinear rather than linear and elaborates specific perspectives whose combination forms a compact whole. Individual parts of the research can, therefore, stand on their own to some degree. The analysis itself is composed of four chapters, each of which deals with a particular aspect of the problematique. The narrative is based upon the following research questions:

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<sup>1</sup> Egor Ligachev passed away in 2021, Mikhail Gorbachev a year later and Nikolai Ryzhkov in 2024.

<sup>2</sup> I deal with recent developments in Sino-Russian relations against the background of historical experience in Zemánek (2020).

<sup>3</sup> The concept of paradigm, which was made famous thanks to Thomas Kuhn (1962), is used here as a sedimented, stable discourse in a specific order of discourse without other connotations.

1	Were the socioeconomic conditions in the Soviet Union and China coincident in light of the reform of Stalinist and Maoist models?
	Allowing for socioeconomic affinities and differences, was Dengism applicable in the Soviet Union?
2	Was China relevant to the Soviet leadership and its policy choices and decision-making?
	Did bilateral relations and Soviet perception of the country enable and were supportive of the implementation of Dengism in the Soviet Union?
3	Were at least some discourses compatible with the Chinese reform model?
	Did discursive factors enable the Soviets to implement Dengism?
4	Was the Chinese reform model implemented in the Soviet Union?
	Was Dengism a relevant model up to 1991?
<b>Why was the Chinese reform model eventually dismissed?</b>	

Thematic chapters are preceded by an extensive introduction to theory and methodology. I not only present the theoretical background of the dissertation but also reformulate individual paradigms in order to establish a coherent foundation upon which the research is conducted. Attention is paid especially to constructivism, pragmatism, postmodernism and poststructuralism, discourse theories, and historical sociology with its concept of multiple modernities. The analysis goes on to the methodology and research process itself with the typology of Soviet discourses paired with the definition of Dengism in the core. This part is concluded with remarks on the validity of the present research and the triple triangulation that is applied in the dissertation.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to socioeconomic variables and factors in the Soviet Union and China. First of all, Stalinism is identified with the model that shaped the development of the Soviet Union since the late 1920s until the late 1980s. Drawing upon an extensive study of the literature, I show that Stalinist modernity had decisive implications in terms of the civilisational trajectory of the socialist superpower and the external ramifications of its internal model. The analysis goes on to specific features of Soviet society and economic development inclusive of industry, agriculture, and foreign trade and ends with the Soviet external strategy. The chapter carries out comparisons

with Chinese realities where necessary and draws parallels between both countries. At the same time, mutual differences are addressed to provide readers with a balanced picture of the material (“objective”) socioeconomic conditions under which transformatory processes were launched since 1978.

Chapter 4 focuses on the bilateral relations and China’s place in Soviet imagination and politics throughout the century. This part builds on the assumption that the “subjective” aspect of mutual interaction, as well as the interpretation of China’s development, including but not limited to Maoism and Dengism, could have affected Moscow’s attitudes toward the Asian neighbour and its reform policies, policy choices and decision-making and the applicability of the Chinese reform model in the Soviet Union as such. Naturally, I do not have the ambition of providing an exhaustive analysis of this topic. The aim is to identify relevant tendencies and macrotrends in the field, focusing on the Soviet side of the story. At the same time, the specific features and development of Chinese socialism are addressed, whereby supplementing the analysis of the Stalinist model in the preceding section.

In Chapter 5, a discourse analysis of individual Soviet political discourses existing between 1978 and 1991 is carried out. This method enables me to compare Soviet discourses with Dengism and to put forward an explanation of the reasons for the acceptance or dismissal of the Chinese reform model at the fundamental, that is, *discursive* level. Each discourse is analysed in three regards—in terms of political, economic, and external models, which is sufficient to draw relevant conclusions. In this section, the research draws on period documents in accordance with the theoretical assumptions and methodological tools excluding the use of memoirs and other sources. Conceptual instruments and techniques of discourse analysis are capable of demonstrating the (in)compatibility of Soviet discourses with Dengism and the effects of discursive factors on a wide array of issues inclusive of the applicability of the Chinese reform model in the Soviet Union, reform strategies, and (de)construction of socialism as such.

Chapter 6 conducts a politico-economic analysis of the developments in China and the Soviet Union since the launch of reform processes until the collapse of the socialist superpower. Unlike the previous chapter, this section builds on a lot of sources, particularly archival materials and memoirs. While discourse analysis seeks explanation at the discursive level, historical research investigates concrete political, economic, and social realities. To put it in another way, this chapter enquires into the empirical effects of discourses under specific and unique historical circumstances. After analysing China’s reform and opening up to the necessary extent, attention is paid to reform patterns from Stalin’s death to the late Brezhnevite period and subsequently to

the perestroika in the political, economic and foreign policy fields to correspond to the procedure within the discourse analysis. This final section shows whether the Chinese reform model was implemented in the Soviet Union, when, how, and by whom.

Each chapter casts light on the problematique from a different angle. Together, they create a comprehensive picture of the relations of the Soviet leadership with Dengism in both synchronic and diachronic terms and enable me to explicate the role of Dengism in the Soviet reforms, including but not limited to the final dismissal of the Chinese reform model, at the discursive, institutional, and political level. Inquiring into the links between Soviet leaders and Dengism, the present research puts forward an original interpretation of perestroika and its metamorphosis throughout the period in question. Each chapter includes a conclusion summarising partial findings to make the dissertation reader-friendly.

## 1.2 Sources review

The dissertation is based on an extensive study of primary and secondary sources. Unfortunately, research was negatively affected by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. These events made “offline” research in Russian archives, despite my original intentions, impossible. These objective circumstances forced me to focus on memoirs, digital archives, as well as published archival documents, and highlighted the need for polyperspectivism and thorough triangulation. I believe that this research design and procedure offset the shortage of archival research *sensu stricto*. This subchapter comments on the primary and secondary sources except for theoretical and methodological works which are analysed extensively in the next chapter.

Of great importance is, particularly, the *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, which collects declassified documents from archives around the world. English translation of many of the materials, moreover, enables researchers to use such sources which would be inaccessible otherwise. I used respective documents coming from the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and National Archives, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, French Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mongolian Foreign Ministry Archive, Polish Central Archives of Modern Records, Shanghai Municipal Archives, and, even more importantly, from the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI) and the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF). In the former, fond 89 was especially useful, as it includes documents from the Politburo, CC Secretariat, and other high-level political bodies. The GARF fond 10026, in turn, provided me with relevant materials related to the work of members of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR.

The *National Security Archive* provides access to a number of collections connected with Soviet history and the Cold War. I drew upon a collection dedicated to the Brezhnevite period, including materials from the Politburo, China-related documents as well as KGB briefings which cover China issues. The *El'tsin Presidential Center Archive* keeps many documents related to Boris El'tsin's personal and professional life, which are collected in fond 6 of the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation. These were very useful given the lack of published sources in this regard. Similarly, the *Egor Gaidar Archive* provides documents concerning the State Bank of the USSR and Soviet economic policies. These materials are collected in the fond 2324 of the Russian State Archive of Economy (RGAE). Last but not least, the digital archives of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations were used to access documents related to Moscow's communication about GATT and new international initiatives, respectively.

Aside from the abovementioned materials, a wide array of archival documents was published. The most important are the complete works of Mikhail Gorbachev, which consist of 30 volumes published by the Gorbachev Foundation between 2008 and 2022. I used the first 27 volumes covering the period from November 1961 to August 1991 and including both public and nonpublic documents ranging from speeches to records of conversations and correspondence. In 2016, three volumes of notes and diaries of Leonid Brezhnev were published based on materials collected in fond 80 in RGANI. Both the Brezhnev and Gorbachev collections were priceless to my research, as they show an important role of China for Soviet leaders and present an insider perspective *par excellence*. A fascinating view on perestroika from within is provided by notes and minutes taken by Anatolii Cherniaev, Vadim Medvedev, and Georgii Shakhnazarov at meetings of Politburo, Presidential Council, Security Council, and other high-level bodies, as well as during Gorbachev's private conversations between 1985 and 1991. These were published by the Gorbachev Foundation in 2008. In the same year, a collection of archival materials from GARF fond 10063 was published in Moscow. Those documents were authored by Aleksandr Iakovlev who played an important role in Soviet perestroika. Furthermore, a useful insight into China-related issues in the highest echelons of Soviet power is provided by a collection of articles, briefings, diaries, interviews and memoranda of Vladimir Lukin, an academician, MFA official and Russian people's deputy who participated in the China agenda. It was published on the occasion of Lukin's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary in 2018.

In addition to archival materials, there are other crucial primary sources: official documents, speeches, and other period publications, as well as memoirs. The choice of authors and materials corresponds to the focus on Soviet political leadership. The dissertation draws upon the works of Politburo members including general secretaries, high-level officials from the party

and state apparatus inclusive of diplomatic, military and security representatives, ministers of the central government, political consultants and aides, as well as politicians outside the central party bodies where necessary. In addition, collections of documents and chosen stenographic records from the 24th to 28th CPSU Congresses (1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, and 1990) and the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU All-Union Conference (1988) are used, along with documents issued by the GKChP (1991). As far as memoirs are concerned, the attitude towards the choice of authors remains the same. I researched almost 50 memoirs which were published since 1988 until 2021 when Gorbachev wrote his last article in *Russia in Global Affairs* in which he provided readers with a final retrospective assessment of perestroika.

The secondary literature offers many perspectives on different topics related to those researched in the dissertation. The latter's specific feature is that it combines several subtopics which are dealt with in the respective chapters. As a result, one cannot embrace the existing secondary sources in their entirety. Therefore, their choice was based on three main criteria: provenance, discipline, and paradigm. I wanted to draw upon authors from different cultural milieux starting from the Western and ending with the Russian and Chinese ones. Consulting authors from different disciplinary backgrounds was to strengthen the multidisciplinary and multifaceted character of my research. Hence the dissertation draws upon works of economists (Mikhail Alekseev, Anders Åslund, Philip Hanson, Grigorii Khanin, Chris Miller, Pekka Sutela), scholars of international relations and their history (Evgenii Bazhanov, Chen Jian, Lowell Dittmer, Andrei Grachev, Li Xiaobing, Aleksandr Lukin, Lorenz Lüthi, Sergei Radchenko, Péter Vámos, Vladislav Zubok), scholars of political history (Archie Brown, Stephen Cohen, Robert Daniels, Moshe Lewin, Richard Sakwa, Robert Tucker), as well as cultural historians and sociologists (Jóhann Árnason, Stephen Kotkin, Vladimir Shliapentokh).

Similarly, I considered necessary to refer to authors with different worldviews and scholarly paradigms to make them communicate with each other in a pluralist environment. History of the Soviet Union has been inquired into from different vantage points, among which the dichotomy between totalitarianism and revisionism belongs to the most prominent ones. Even though I work with authors who identify themselves with the totalitarian approach (Leon Aron, Robert Conquest, Robert English, Richard Pipes), revisionists such as Stephen Cohen, Chen Jian, Jerry Hough, Moshe Lewin, Chris Miller, or Sergei Radchenko are closer to my own conception. After all, revisionism can be perceived as a neverending effort to bring new interpretations and innovative ideas. Cohen put it simply: "Scholarly revisionism—the process of challenging old answers with new research and longer perspectives—is essential for any intellectual field worthy

of the name.”<sup>4</sup> In this line of reasoning, the dissertation deals with a marginalised and underresearched topic, seeking to illuminate those parts of historical reality that were left behind as they did not suit a narrative of the winners of the Cold War.

Even though the Chinese vector of perestroika has sometimes been addressed in one way or another, there is no in-depth analysis of the links between the Soviet leaders and Dengism. The only exception is Chris Miller’s book *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* from 2016, which is based on the assumption that China played a central role in Soviet debates about the reform of socialism. Miller’s analysis was the key to the problematique for me, helping me to familiarise myself with reform processes in both the Soviet Union and China. However, his conclusion that Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders could not implement the Chinese model based on political authoritarianism seems unconvincing to me, for the existence of objective socioeconomic differences themselves cannot imply this conclusion necessarily. That is why I decided to widen the scope of the research, allowing for other historical aspects and put the problematique into a solid theoretical framework to yield more robust results. Stimulating are the analyses carried out by Peter Nolan in his *China’s Rise, Russia’s Fall. Politics, Economics and Planning in the Transition from Stalinism* (1995) and Christopher Marsh in *Unparalleled Reforms. China’s Rise, Russia’s Fall and the Interdependence of Transition* (2005). Both presented a comparative perspective on reform processes in the Soviet Union and China. According to Nolan, the Gorbachevian perestroika resembled the reform process in the Asian country at first, but resulted in a collapse due to political miscalculations and reforms. Similarly, Marsh emphasises mutual influences between parallel reform processes, but limits himself to comparisons without a deeper analysis of Soviet decision-making or the role of discursive factors in shaping reform policies. The latter applies to Nolan as well.

In addition, there are studies that focus on Soviet interpretations of China and their impact on Soviet policies in relation to the Asian neighbour. Gilbert Rozman is a pioneer in this field. His research from the 1980s, particularly *A Mirror for Socialism: Soviet Criticisms of China* (1985) suffered from the absence of archival and nonpublic documents and biographies, being based on academic discourse only, but his findings were illuminating and created fertile soil for further research. Drawing on the works of the American sociologist, Aleksandr Lukin elaborated a comprehensive history of China’s image in Russia and the Soviet Union in his monograph *The Bear Watches the Dragon: Russia’s Perceptions of China and the Evolution of Russian-Chinese*

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<sup>4</sup> Cohen (1985).

*Relations since the Eighteenth Century* (2003). He is attentive to different perceptions of China and her reforms after 1978 and argues that China issues were affected by internal political processes in the Soviet Union. This observation, along with his emphasis on a constructivist approach, motivated me to apply the constructivist methodology and focus on the analysis of general discursive structures which shaped the interpretation of China, as well as policy choices. Lukin's research was followed by Elizabeth Wishnick whose book *Mending Fences. The Evolution of Moscow's China Policy from Brezhnev to Yeltsin* (2014) covers the historical period which is examined in the present dissertation. Even though she is predominantly concerned with foreign policy and bilateral relations, her focus on the reconstruction of the strategic environment influencing Soviet decision-making and China policy was very helpful to me, even more so that it recognises the crucial role of ideology.

Researchers have often dealt with chosen issues and periods of Sino-Soviet relations, such as the alliance of the 1950s and the split of the following decade. Nevertheless, a long-term perspective is needed to identify (macro)trends and development trajectories that shape mutual interactions. In this sense, it was especially *A Short History of Sino-Soviet Relations, 1917–1991*, a book published in Singapore in 2020 under the aegis of Shen Zihua, which is, despite its title, far from short. This inspiring collective monograph draws upon new interpretations of the Cold War period as represented by authors such as Jeremy Friedman, Austin Jersild, Lorenz Lüthi, and Sergei Radchenko. Indeed, some of these authors changed my perspective on a variety of aspects of the twentieth century,, and their interpretations and insights influenced this dissertation. To give a couple of examples, Radchenko's argument about Gorbachev's fascination with Asia made me rethink the widespread Westernist interpretations of the last Soviet leader, while Friedman's differentiation between anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism and their application to the Soviet Union and China contributed to a better understanding of the reform potential of Stalinism and Maoism.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, Li Xiaobing attracted my attention with his book *The Cold War in East Asia* (2018), in which he presents an innovative perspective on the developments in the region. Li refuses a Westcentric interpretation of the Cold War, argues in favour of overcoming the dualism of totalitarianism and revisionism, and analyses East Asia as one of the centres of the Cold War which played a crucial role in the confrontation between Moscow and Washington. The importance of the Third World inclusive of China in the Cold War is also addressed by Odd Arne

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<sup>5</sup> Friedman (2015); Radchenko (2014)

Westad, whose analyses of the Cold War and the history of international relations, particularly his 2013 monograph *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, had an influence on me. Overall, the “revisionist” interpretations of the past century are presented by the North Carolina Press New Cold War History series, whose contribution is invaluable.

Finally, I owe my understanding of the economic history of the Soviet Union to Philip Hanson, who elaborated a comprehensive and in-depth analysis in his 2014 book *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy. An Economic History of the USSR from 1945*. From his point of view, the economic collapse was not caused by economic factors and policies, but by destabilising political processes. Such a conclusion supplements Shliapentokh’s thesis that neither the Soviet society nor the economy were in crisis when perestroika was launched. Findings of the prominent exile sociologist, published in *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How It Collapsed* (2001), enriched this dissertation in many respects. An enormous influence did the American scholar of Russian studies Stephen Cohen have. His research into Soviet history including the country’s collapse, the “rehabilitation” of Egor Ligachev, who was generally seen as an “anti-perestroika” man, as well as reflections on the reformability of Soviet socialism, were very inspiring to me. Not by coincidence, his *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War* (2011), addressing lost alternatives which actually existed throughout Soviet history aroused my interest in paths not taken, wasted opportunities, and historical existence of different reform models. It resulted in the search for different “perestroiki” in the late Soviet Union and links between Soviet and Chinese reform processes.

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In the dissertation, I use a simplified romanisation of the Russian language according to the standards of the American Library Association and Library of Congress (ALA/LC). Chinese words are transcribed according to pinyin. I adhere to British spelling—the American one is used only in citations and titles if these occur in the original.

## 2 Theory and methodology

In this chapter, the theoretical *constructivist perspective* that is applied in the dissertation is introduced and analysed. From the constructivist point of view, ideas matter, and reality is socially constructed. Constructivism reflects the linguistic turn in philosophy and social sciences, focusing on the role of *language* and *signs* in social and political processes. Similarly, it overcomes ontological atomism by situating the subject in society. The subject becomes a “social product” in the same way as reality becomes a “human product”, an objectivised human construct. These observations create favourable conditions for the inclusion of pragmatism’s fallibility of knowledge, perspectivism and poststructuralist discourse theory. The latter brings very useful insights and concepts that deepen the potential of constructivist research.

Social constructivism is supplemented by the *pragmatic* concept of truth based on the *fallibility of knowledge*. The category of truth is defined in terms of empirical effects, functionality and—in a sense—a function of hegemony. *Perspectivism* is common to both the American pragmatist tradition starting from William James and later constructivism and is complementary to *ontological relativism*, according to which the external reality is shaped by subjective perceptions, mental processes, and, in the upshot, language schemes, which are essentially intersubjective and collectively shared. From the perspective of ontological relativism, reality is rather a function of one’s experience and conceptual scheme. It follows that both individuals and societies live in diverse realities, which coincides with what is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

All these attitudes can be subsumed into the general framework of *postmodernism*, even though pragmatism precedes it historically. Nevertheless, its implications including the fallibility of knowledge and perspectivism might be reformulated in a postmodernist way, as I do in this work. Postmodernism entails genuine *pluralism* and includes *poststructuralism*. The principle of pluralism is particularly important because it undermines modernist and Westcentric narratives and grand ideologies that tend to “soliloquy” and absolutism. The introduction of pluralism enables me to recognise the legitimacy of alternatives and the equal existence of “the others” in a wide range of fields, for instance, cultures, socioeconomic models or development patterns. In the present thesis, the poststructuralist focus on deconstruction (Jacques Derrida), discourse (Michel Foucault), language and power, and, last but not least, historicism, dynamism and intersubjectivity (against both atomism and holistic collectivism), is followed.

The *Marxist* tradition can hardly be omitted as well. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels considerably influenced the development of human thought and societies. I especially draw upon the work of Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe, reformulating the Marxist concepts in a creative way with the aim of going beyond the original economic determinism and one-sided class-based perspective. Gramsci made great steps in this direction through the introduction of the concept of *hegemony*. The latter can be effectively used against the background of the abovementioned theories in order to explicate the dynamics of social development and political struggles in relation to discursive strategies. Althusser remained close to Marxist orthodoxy in many respects; nevertheless, his concepts of *ideological state apparatuses* and *interpellation* together with an emphasis on the role of ideology and the “superstructure” as such are of high relevance. The Marxist tradition, as well as poststructuralism, constructivism, (post)analytic philosophy, and Lacanian psychoanalysis, was developed by Laclau and Mouffe from the 1980s and resulted in the emergence of the Essex School. My research is strongly influenced by their *discourse theory*, entailing anti-essentialism, anti-foundationalism, contingency, materiality of discourse, pluralism, ineradicability of contradictions, permanent rearrangement of social terrain, and finally the primacy of the political. In the last four points, there are significant overlaps with Carl Schmitt, whose *concept of the political* is inspiring and relevant for my research topic. The assumption of the central role of politics (and the hegemonic ideology) is the reason for the emphasis on the Soviet political elites. I will address not only the discursive theory of Laclau and Mouffe but also that of Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, or Ruth Wodak to define concepts such as ideology and discourse that are crucial for this work. Ambiguity and a variety of definitions provide us with a leeway to find a suitable interpretation that fits the research intention and design.

Pluralism and disassociation from Westcentric bias in research coincide with a “civilisational” turn in sociology, which I consider as important as the linguistic and cultural turn in philosophy and social sciences. Thanks to such authors as Shmuel Eisenstadt and Johann Arnason, historical sociology managed to overcome narrow-minded models of social processes through emphasising long-term cultural patterns that affect the development of societies and civilisations. It enabled a new perspective on modernisation and modernity as such, on Soviet and Chinese development models that are not perceived as deviant forms of modernity, but as legitimate, peculiar paradigms through the concept of *multiple modernities*. I use the findings of this stream of historical sociology, especially in Arnason’s interpretation, to put Soviet socialism and Soviet reformism of the last quarter of the twentieth century into a broader historical framework to help better explain the concrete historical forms of hegemonic ideology and

discourses and the overall socioeconomic constellation. I believe that a significant role in perestroika was played by the “eternal” internal dispute over Russia’s role in the world history, Russia’s place in global civilisation, and Russia’s identity, no matter that Russian statehood and culture had a specific Soviet shape for most of the last century. All in all, the combination of constructivist background, discourse theory, and historical sociology can bring results and meet the requirements and goals of this research project.

## 2.1 Social constructivism

In 1966, American sociologists Berger and Luckmann published their seminal work titled *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, whereby they laid the foundations for social constructivism. Indeed, their opus was multidisciplinary, drawing upon the thought of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, George Herbert Mead as well as Helmuth Plessner, and Arnold Gehlen, thus synthetising findings from sociology, psychology, biology, and philosophy. The basic assumption presented by Berger and Luckmann is that reality is socially constructed, not objectively and independently existent. The authors analyse the process by which reality becomes perceived as objective, as a facticity external to the subject. The objectivation process is characteristic of a complex continuum of typification, habitualisation, signification, institutionalisation, and legitimation within which language plays a central role. I follow the concept of anthropology of the authors that rejects the atomistic notion of man as a self-sufficient and independent subject. On the contrary, *homo sapiens* is always *homo socius*.<sup>6</sup> The intersubjective terrain allows me to conceptualise the dialectical relationship between individuals and society within a concrete social order, which is in permanent formation, production, reproduction and transformation as a result of man’s anthropological need to externalise himself in activities and interaction with others. These actions become habitualised in a stable way, thus entailing institutional structures. Institutions, in turn, entail control, being imbued with relations of power and dominance. Through these processes, the man-made social world and order become objective and exert pressure on the subjects. The utmost form of objectivation is *reification* when the phenomenon in question is perceived in completely non-human terms. “Even while apprehending the world in reified terms, man continues to produce it. That is, man is capable, paradoxically, of producing a reality that denies him.”<sup>7</sup> The crucial point

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<sup>6</sup> Berger & Luckmann (1971), p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Berger & Luckmann (1971), p. 107.

is that it is always the man who makes the world and introduces power and force into it. I use the theories of discourse and hegemony to address and analyse this dimension.

The attendant process of objectivation is a *legitimation* that has both cognitive and normative components, consisting of both knowledge and values. Institutions and the social order as a whole need legitimacy in order to be able to reproduce themselves and maintain its objective status. Legitimation, rooted in intersubjectively constructed knowledge and normativity, occurs through language (discourse), which again appears as a pivotal social phenomenon. Individual discourses produce a specific symbolic universe that seeks to reach universality and completeness, but it is inherently unstable. That is why legitimation arises as the major instrument to fix the symbolic universe, meaning, objective existence, and absolute validity. The objectivity of the symbolic universe becomes problematised and threatened in the case of encounters with different ones, as happened many times in world history. Similarly, the taken-for-granted character of a universe and order is endangered when a new generation replaces the older one. I will show that both these threats significantly affected the reform processes in the Soviet Union and China. Berger and Luckmann were aware of the interconnection between objectivation and legitimation on one hand, and power relations and concrete social interests on the other. “To understand the state of the socially constructed universe at any given time, or its change over time, one must understand the social organisation that permits the definers to do their defining.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the investigation of discourses and discursive practices will be put in the context of political, institutional, and economic development, without which the research into the Soviet reformism would remain at the level of textual analysis *tout court*.

## 2.2 Pragmatism

Berger and Luckmann followed the American pragmatist thought in many respects. Thus, it is natural to look at the roots and use the pragmatist concepts introduced by William James at the beginning of the twentieth century to expand the terrain of our inquiry and adopt what is suitable for the theoretical universe upon which the research project is based. In his *Pragmatism. A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, published in 1907, James at first draws attention to the subjective, psychological background of thinking and knowledge, differentiating between two types of human nature—empiricist and rationalist. The type of nature affects the way how one perceives the world, how one understands it, and acts in it. Although such an interpretation can

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<sup>8</sup> Berger & Luckmann (1971), p. 134.

seem to defend atomism, such a conclusion is untenable in light of the author's further reasoning, as well as the very intrinsic "logic" of his conception.

James' vision of the external reality, man, and society is fundamentally intersubjective. It manifests itself in pragmatism's concept of truth. James turned down traditional foundationalism and correspondence theory of truth and formulated a *coherence theory* which is—unlike Kant's—intersubjective. The category of truth is defined not as a property but as a process, which makes it dynamic, exposed to changes, and dependent on external, historically conditioned and contingent factors. "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. The truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is made true by events."<sup>9</sup> Hence, the truth is instrumental and dependent on its functionality, on its effects. An idea is true if and only if it corresponds to other parts of one's experience, if it expands and deepens the hitherto obtained pieces of knowledge. In other words, an idea is true as long as it works in practice. Such a notion of truth is, of course, contradictory to essentialism, according to which it is a static property that is to be revealed. The method of revelation is completely irrelevant in coherentism since the truth ceases to be a truth if it is no longer coherent with the rest of particular knowledge. This perspective, therefore, implies a pluralism of truths which, on one hand, undermines universality and strengthens particularism but, on the other, creates conditions for recognition of different systems—be they theories, discourses or cultures—as legitimate and equal.

Following the argumentation, one can say that the antipode of the truth is not a falsehood but another truth. The only test of verity is then the functionality in both individual and social practice and the level of coherence with other parts of socially distributed knowledge. The social level of the process is—again—intertwined with power relations, and in this regard, the truth can be interpreted as a function of hegemony. Given the intersubjective character of knowledge and truths—based on language as the social institution *par excellence*—these depend on the confidence and subsequent conviction that the particular knowledge corresponds to reality. For this, James uses the term *credit system*. Knowledge is arbitrary, socially conditioned and constructed, historically developing, and inseparable from power and dominance. The objective, independent external reality does exist, being, however, inaccessible immediately. Similarly, pragmatism and coherentism do not exclude the existence of a universal truth (or at least its possibility), but its cognition is pushed beyond history. Under such circumstances, the

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<sup>9</sup> James (1907), p. 201.

appropriate way to examine the reality is to inquire into both the potential and existent effects of the object in question and its position in discourses.

The coherence theory of truth provides us with a new perspective on the metamorphoses of political discourses through demonstrating the significance of reinterpretations and conceptual changes within a particular discourse and the order of discourse alike. The lack or insufficient level of coherence results in disintegration, collapse, and loss of legitimacy. Pragmatism's coherentism also shows the need to draw on domestic sources and local cultural patterns. An excessive openness and exposition to, as well as dependence on, culturally different patterns undermine the dominant paradigm, requiring stronger power interventions and repression, which may destroy the established hegemony. This is exactly the case of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### 2.3 Poststructuralist discourse theories

The field of discourse theories is wide and heterogeneous and contains a wide range of authors with different approaches and methods. There is no consensus as far as the definition of *discourse* itself is concerned, no consensus about the methods to be employed, or the basic question whether the reality is compound of discursive as well as non-discursive elements, or whether there is nothing beyond the universe of discourses. Nevertheless, discourse theories share some fundamental premises and assumptions.<sup>10</sup>

Following social constructivism, discourse theorists deny the possibility of cognition of reality *per se*, since reality is accessible only through categories created by and in discourse. The social world is thus constructed discursively and socially, and its character is neither pre-given nor objective. From this anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist position emerges that knowledge is contingent, historically and culturally conditioned and specific. Given that knowledge is constructed through social interaction, the category of truth becomes arbitrary, resulting from a consensus established amidst social struggles and competition between different discourses. The definition and fixation of knowledge and truths are *hegemonic* operations. A particular knowledge has concrete social consequences for different perceptions of reality, and different worldviews lead to different actions. This point is of special importance because it shows the crucial role of discourses in historical events as well as in the emergence and evolution of "socioeconomic formations" in terms of both base and superstructure. Consequently, it undermines essentialism and economic determinism, justifies the role of consciousness and

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<sup>10</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 12.

knowledge, and finally reformulates the traditional dualism of idealism and materialism through giving the ideational, discursive structures a *material* character.

Discourse theories draw upon *structuralist* and especially *poststructuralist* linguistic philosophy. For both streams is typical certain distance from objective reality and essentialism. Signs do not derive their meaning from external reality, but from internal relations among themselves. They are defined through the difference from each other. The static Saussurian structuralism was developed by poststructuralists to become dynamic, changing, and pluralistic. The language structure is no longer monolithic, stable, and unambiguous but is exposed to permanent restructuring and metamorphoses in social practice. Jørgensen and Phillips summarise the (post)structuralist elements of discourse theories in four points: “Language is not a reflection of a pre-existing reality. Language is structured in patterns or discourses—there is not just one general system of meaning as in Saussurian structuralism, but a series of systems or discourses, whereby meanings change from discourse to discourse. These discursive patterns are maintained and transformed in discursive practices. The maintenance and transformation of the patterns should therefore be explored through analysis of the specific contexts in which language is in action.”<sup>11</sup> Such a plastic concept coincides with the constructivist and pragmatist background, providing us with an increasingly effective theoretical apparatus for the analyses of the Soviet reality.

When dealing with discourse theory, one cannot miss out French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault who influenced the field considerably and brought some key insights central to my research. Foucault’s work can be divided into two phases—archaeological and genealogical. *Archaeology* is concerned with discourse *qua* rules for delineating and constructing individual areas of knowledge. The basic axiom is that discourse is constitutive in relation to the reality and social world. The character, content, structure, and rules of knowledge as well as truth vary in different fields, thus rejecting the absolute and objective status of both knowledge and truth since these depend on discourse. Unlike Foucault, who tended to identify only one discourse system in a concrete historical period, later discourse theories would introduce pluralism in this perspective, concluding that there are usually more discourses existing concurrently and struggling with each other for dominance. The pluralist notion enables us to apply the concept of hegemony to analyse such competition and struggles.

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<sup>11</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 17.

Foucault's *genealogy* reflects the dimension of power and the relationship between power and knowledge, accentuating the central role of discourse in the social area. "Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is a struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized."<sup>12</sup> Foucault adopted structuralism's notion of interrelatedness and the role of differences when he stressed that discursive practices gain their meaning through relations with others. Of great relevance is Foucault's interpretation of the role of power and politics in discursive practices. Discourse, power, politics, and social change are inseparable from each other, which helps to identify the decisive factors and explain the behaviour of actors in political processes within a broader social framework. The object of analysis is, therefore, the discourses themselves, their structure, changes, and effects.

### 2.3.1 Laclau and Mouffe's theory

The three following subchapters are dedicated to the analysis of discourse theorists who are especially relevant and inspirational for my research. The first are Laclau and Mouffe whose thought largely draws upon Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and Carl Schmitt. Their concepts—particularly discourse, hegemony and the primacy of the political—were used to further develop the Marxist tradition and overcome it at the same time. Their radical anti-essentialism, non-determinism as well as the notion of the social world as completely discursive go further compared to Marxism with its dialectical and historical materialism, Althusser, Gramsci, Foucault, or critical discourse analysts like Fairclough. Laclau and Mouffe were also influenced by Jacques Derrida with his deconstruction and undecidability and by Jacques Lacan. In 1985 they published the fundamental work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, in which they formulated some original concepts that are applicable in the present research.

It is the notion of *hegemony* which is enormously important in terms of discourse analysis. Interestingly, the concept itself appeared in the milieu of the Russian Menshevik Marxists, even though it became well known thanks to Gramsci only later. Its emergence was related to the crisis of Marxism observable since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a result of the obvious incongruence between the Marxist theory and social practice. Marxist innovators such as Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein sought ways to rehabilitate the autonomy of the political and ethical spheres. Similarly, Vladimir Lenin reformulated the Marxist theory, postulating the crucial

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<sup>12</sup> Fairclough (2020), p. 51.

role of political leadership. The Leninist vision of vanguardism of the Communist Party followed the domestic Russian revolutionary tradition and undermined the economic determinism in favour of voluntarism and certain autonomy of the superstructure including the political domain. At the same time, Lenin did not transcend the static, essentialist perspective on social structure and class actors. He managed to work with the logic of hegemony, but the hegemonic operations and interventions through the political avantgarde did not change the pre-given class character and identity of the actors involved. On the contrary, Laclau and Mouffe emphasise that the identity of classes is being transformed depending on the concrete, historically conditioned hegemonic tasks. As a result, the class character is relativised, which creates conditions for restructuring the social terrain and transformation of the identity of social actors.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of hegemony and slightly dynamised social terrain was further developed by Gramsci, who drew attention to the role of ideas, values, and ideology in the social and political processes. The class domination is not conceptualised in terms of violence and force only but in terms of the formation of *historical blocs* whose coherence is secured by a collective will based upon shared ideology. Gramsci no longer perceives ideology as a mere “scholastic” system of ideas or Marxist false consciousness, but as a complex relational whole embodied in institutions and apparatuses. Gramsci models a much more dynamic, fragmented, and opaque social landscape within which individual social actors seek to establish a historical bloc through hegemonic actions based on ideology that goes beyond a specific class. The Italian philosopher thus provides us with an ambiguous, not-so-determinist picture that collides with historical optimism accompanied by a vision of linear progress. “History (...) is regarded not as an ascendant *continuum* of democratic reforms, but as a discontinuous series of hegemonic formations or historical blocs.”<sup>14</sup> Hegemony as an essentially political phenomenon becomes rather the organisation of consent throughout classes. At the same time, Gramsci did not overcome essentialism completely, since he insisted that each socioeconomic formation was structured around one hegemonic centre, while the position of both the subject inside and outside the historical bloc remained defined in class terms. This lack of pluralism is similar to the Foucaultian perspective, which identifies only one discourse in each socioeconomic formation, and Althusser’s interpretation of ideological state apparatuses, which underestimates the possibility of the coexistence of competing, rival, contradictory apparatuses within one social order.

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<sup>13</sup> Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 58.

<sup>14</sup> Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 71.

Laclau and Mouffe interpret hegemony in terms of the absence of totality and attempt to overcome this absence through rearticulations aimed at the establishment of a new, full positivity, totality, and universality with unambiguous meaning. This interpretation points to the crucial role of language, meaning, and discourse. The specific feature of the authors' perspective is that they reject the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices (unlike Fairclough's conception), and thus the reality as a whole is conceptualised exclusively in discursive terms. In other words, there is no subject or object beyond the boundaries of discourse for us. At the same time, the fundamental assertion that objects are always constituted discursively does not deny the existence of a world external to thought and mental representations, but the very possibility of cognitive processes independent of discourse. It follows that the traditional dichotomy between thought and reality is being rejected.

It brings me to the basic question as to what the discourse according to Laclau and Mouffe is. Discourse is the fixation of meaning in a particular domain in which meaning is defined through the difference from one another in relation to specific, pivotal, privileged signs called *nodal points* (Lacanian *master signifiers*). Nodal points are centres of discourse and determine the way in which individual components (*moments*) of discourse are defined through the process of articulation. Articulation can be characterised as a practice establishing a relation between elements, that is, differences that are not included in the concrete discourse at a given time. Unlike the structuralist perspective, this structure is being fixed only temporarily depending on hegemonic operations and—in the last instance—power. “Discourse, then, can be understood as a type of structure in a Saussurian sense—a fixation of signs in a relational net. But, in contrast to the Saussurian tradition, whereby the structure covers all signs in a *permanent* closure, discourse, for Laclau and Mouffe, can never be total in the Saussurian sense. There are always other meaning potentials which, when actualised in specific articulations, may challenge and transform the structure of the discourse. Thus, the discourse is a *temporary* closure: it fixes the meaning in a particular way, but it does not dictate that the meaning is to be fixed exactly in that way forever. In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, articulations are contingent interventions in an undecidable terrain.”<sup>15</sup> The authors perceive closure as a temporary stop to the changes of meaning, and discourse then appears as a reduction of possibilities. The excluded possibilities of meaning are called the *field of discursivity*. The discourse *qua* the historically specific, conditioned, contingent, and always uncomplete totality is constituted by articulatory practices, which presuppose that the transformation of elements into moments is a never-ending process.

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<sup>15</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 31.

Following Foucault's insights, Laclau and Mouffe conclude that discourses are of material character, including both linguistic and nonlinguistic elements such as institutions, rituals, and other social practices. Thus, discourses permeate institutions and even become them in a sense, which is a similar perspective as the one of Althusser. Each discourse attempts to establish universality and gain legitimacy, which is made simpler if the particular interpretation becomes objective, perceived as valid, true, and independent of subjects. The product of the processes of objectivation is ideology, even though both Laclau and Mouffe prefer the concept of objectivity to that of ideology. In any case, objectivity or ideology can be described as sedimented, thus especially strong and vital discourse.<sup>16</sup>

Discourse or ideology define and shape the identities of all moments of discourse itself. Nevertheless, the identities are unstable and exposed to pressures and power rearticulations. Each discourse is being undermined by a related field of discursivity, for elements—possible meanings excluded from the discourse—can be used at any time by alternative discourse with the aim of rearticulating the dominant discourse. Those elements that are strongly prone to different ascriptions of meaning are called *floating signifiers*. Discourse constitutes the social terrain and identities by means of *chains of equivalence* in which signs and meanings are fixed in opposition to alternative interpretations. It emerges that the positive articulations are made against the background of the negative ones. The articulation process thus occurs in opposition to different elements and chains of equivalence. It is only such a constellation imbued with differences, antagonisms, friction, competition, and power struggles that enables hegemony. Hegemony stands for the fixation of a particular meaning for the transformation of elements into moments across colliding discourses.

Hegemonic interventions undermine and relativise antagonisms and contradictions, making them temporarily compatible through their rearticulation. It also applies to social actors who can be positively related to each other through appropriate articulation and ideology. In that case, one may speak about the establishment of the Gramscian historical bloc, which is called the *hegemonic formation* by Laclau and Mouffe. "A social and political space relatively unified through the instituting of nodal points and the constitution of tendentially relational identities, is what Gramsci called a historical bloc. The type of link joining the different elements of the historical bloc—not unity in any form of historical a priori, but regularity in dispersion—coincides with our concept of discursive formation."<sup>17</sup> Given the fact that the authors conceptualise both

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<sup>16</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), pp. 36-37.

<sup>17</sup> Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. 136.

base and superstructure in discursive terms, being constituted through the same discursive processes, the Marxist economic determinism and essentialism are transcended. The social order is no longer determined by the economic base and class struggle, but is shaped by discursive, articulatory practices, and hegemonic operations. And these are essentially political. Therefore, it is the political that has the primacy.

*The primacy of politics* emerges from the structural contingency and undecidability of articulations, as well as the ineradicability of antagonisms. The Schmittian category of the political thus does not appertain the superstructure, but it is the very ontology of the social.<sup>18</sup> Discourse as the factor constituting the sphere of the social is based upon power relations within which articulatory and hegemonic practices are the primary structural processes. The openness and contingency of the social can be dealt with, but by means of politics. The latter implies a plurality and particularism that follows from the definition of discourse and hegemony. Hegemonic actions aimed at the establishment and maintenance of a chain of equivalence presuppose the existence of antagonism and dialectics of inclusion and exclusion. In this regard, Schmitt makes an important observation when he emphasises that politics requires the *enemy* as a constitutive antagonism. However, the enemy is a *public*, not a *private* enemy.<sup>19</sup> From such a perspective, the goal of the political struggle is not the elimination of the enemy but the formation of boundaries between own positivity and alien negativity, maintenance of hegemony, and historical bloc. The Schmittian interpretation thus complements the theory of discourse, showing the crucial role of politics in social life.

### 2.3.2 *Critical discourse analysis*

Discourse is a subject matter of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which has generated many stimulating points. The CDA is not a homogeneous school with strict features. On the contrary, they comprise many strands whose common denominator is the deconstruction of ideologies and power through the analysis of semiotic data. The CDA are typical of an interdisciplinary, eclectic, problem-oriented approach. Finally, they require self-reflection and explicit definition from the author, who remains dependent on the existing social contexts and structures. It makes, in turn, one's research embedded in a specific social milieu. The orientation of the CDA coincides with the goals and practices of the Frankfurt School and its followers. Critical discourse studies emerged in the 1990s around Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, Theo van

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<sup>18</sup> Laclau & Mouffe (1985), p. xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Schmitt (2007), pp. 28-29.

Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak, who focused on the social context of language use. However, attention was drawn to larger language units such as texts and communicative events, not isolated words or sentences.

The contextual and comprehensive character of the analysis is crucial. Discourses are seen as historically conditioned and evolving structures that are both socially constitutive and socially conditioned, preserving the *status quo* and concurrently transforming it. The perspective of dialectical relations between discourse and the social is different from that presented by Laclau and Mouffe. From the point of view of the CDA, the discursive constitution of society emerges from social practices based upon and oriented towards material social structures.<sup>20</sup> Critical discourse analysts are also closer to the Marxist tradition (including Althusser) than Laclau, Mouffe, or Foucault as far as the question of ideology is concerned. Whereas the latter recognises the productive, positive role of force in social processes, the former emphasises its oppressive character accompanying the subjugation of one social group to another, the dominance and control preserving the social inequality that is constituted, expressed, legitimised, and maintained in discourse, hence language.

Discourses are perceived as “relatively stable uses of language serving the organisation and structuring of social life”.<sup>21</sup> They are both a consequence of power and domination and technology to exert power. Subjects participate in different discursive games according to the rules of the discourse in question. Within each discourse, actors have a certain latitude of acting, but it is not absolute in any case; on the contrary, such leeway is more or less limited by the discourse itself through the *habitus*, a structure ensuring that actors follow the rules of the concrete social field where struggles over the distribution of resources are going on. The introduction of Bourdieu’s concepts (*habitus*, social field) reflects the greater emphasis that the CDA put on the social sphere and non-discursive factors in discursive processes. However, it should be noted that both *habitus* and social field cannot be defined outside of the domain of discourses. *Habitus* may be a useful concept, but it is not independent of discourse. That is why I do not use Bourdieuan concepts in this work, as I prefer to follow the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe. By contrast, I consider CDA’s interest in analysing and explaining the relationship between historical processes and hegemonic narratives as well as the assumption that concrete policies integrate the past, present and future, forming a peculiar synthesis, essential.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 56.

<sup>21</sup> Wodak & Meyer (2016), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Wodak & Meyer (2016), p. 13.

Recognising the importance of experience, patterns, and traditions for shaping the present agenda and visions for the future corresponds to insights from historical sociology that I draw on, being an attitude close to the concept of path dependence as well.<sup>23</sup>

There is a multiplicity of strands within the CDA. One of them is the discourse-historical approach (DHA). It defines discourse as a “cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action” and a “dynamic semiotic entity open to reinterpretation and continuation”.<sup>24</sup> These definitions are in accordance with the notion of Foucault or Laclau and Mouffe. Unlike them, DHA accentuates the difference between discourse and ideology when the latter is a structure that includes mental representations, experience, opinions, attitudes, values, and beliefs shared by a social group. Ideologies have a high degree of comprehensiveness and complexity, tending to pretend that they are overall, all-encompassing, absolute worldviews. For this reason, ideologies play a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of social identities around grand narratives and unequal power relations. Although a certain differentiation between discourses and ideologies is justifiable, ideologies are but discourses in the upshot.

Within the CDA, Jäger and Maier build on Foucaultian heritage stronger than the discourse-historical approach. Discourse is considered an institutionalised way of talking and nonlinguistically performed acting that regulates and reinforces action, and hence exerts power. The emphasis is placed on the role of discourses in the construction and shaping of social reality. The authors argue that discourse theory is materialist in essence, for discourses are of material nature, being material realities among other materialities. Discourses are even depicted as a societal means of production *sui generis* producing both subjects and objects.<sup>25</sup> Reality is constituted through a discourse within which subjects are both its co-agents and co-producers, active and productive but also dependent and controlled actors. The source of their action is knowledge, which is inherently social, intersubjective, and shared by members of epistemic communities. Knowledge is imbued with power relations which are capable of inducing behaviour and discourse. Power in relation to discourse is exercised in two ways—as a power *of* discourse and that *over* discourse. Jäger and Maier strictly follow the Foucaultian perspective, concluding that subjects are made by discourses. The power of discourse finds expression at two levels: “Firstly, discourses form individual and mass consciousness and thereby constitute

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<sup>23</sup> Pierson (2000).

<sup>24</sup> Reisigl & Wodak (2016), p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Jäger & Maier (2016), p. 112.

individual and collective subjects. Secondly, since consciousness determines action, discourses determine action and action creates materialisations. Discourses thus guide the individual and collective creation of reality. From a discourse-theoretical point of view, it is thus not the subject who makes the discourses, but the discourses that make the subject (which may be irritating for those attached to the idea of the uniqueness of the individual).”<sup>26</sup>

In order to avoid one-sidedness, the radicality of this position might be mitigated by the recognition of the possibility of creative (re)shaping of discourse without which the very category of power would lose its meaning because the absolutisation of the role of discourse and concurrent marginalisation or elimination of subjective potency makes impossible the historically-oriented analysis of the emergence and evolution of discourses and discursive formations. The relations between discourse and subjects in the power context are dialectical, emerging from social interactions. As discourses have a history, they can and should be analysed both synchronically and diachronically. Discourses become tangible by means of texts and non-linguistic acts, so these must be studied. At the same time, however, it is the discourse, not the text, that really matters in the last instance because a single text usually has little effect unlike the discourse itself, which constitutes and solidifies collective as well as individual knowledge. In this regard, Fairclough states that the concrete social effects of texts (or discourses) depend on the process of meaning-making. In other words, social effects are produced by meanings rather than the texts themselves. That is why Fairclough formulates a social theory of discourse which synthesises socially and linguistically oriented perspectives on discourse.

Generally, Fairclough’s attitude is focused primarily on the text, building on microinsights produced by linguistics. A linguistic turn in social theory followed a preceding analogous process in philosophy. The inclusion of the language factor to Marxism was carried out by Gramsci and Althusser, who drew attention to the role of ideology as a modality of power, hence discourses and language for modern social reproduction. Without language, signs, and meaning, no hegemony as the principal instrument of social evolution could be established. “Seeking hegemony is a matter of seeking to universalise particular meanings in the service of achieving and maintaining dominance and this is ideological work.”<sup>27</sup> Fairclough was inspired not only by Marxist tradition but also by critical linguistics, developed by Michael Halliday in the 1970s. Halliday assumes that texts enact social relations and establish identities, which is an insight that can be combined with social theories of discourse such as that of Foucault. Drawing upon the

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<sup>26</sup> Jäger & Maier (2016), p. 117.

<sup>27</sup> Fairclough (2003), p. 58.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, both Halliday and Fairclough highlight that languages embody a particular worldview which is imposed on their speakers. Language, therefore, plays a prominent role in ideologies and political processes. For this reason, critical interpretation based on context-related analysis of linguistic structures is needed to identify meanings in discourses.<sup>28</sup> Not by coincidence, Fairclough refers to the work of Michel Pêcheux, who focused on the critical analysis of political discourse, following Althusser's concept of ideology. Pêcheux interprets discourse as the preeminent linguistic material form of ideology and coins the concept of *discursive formation* when the latter determines what can and should be said in a particular ideological formation. In other words, discursive formation stands for the rules of discursive practices. From the abovementioned sources does Fairclough draw a conclusion that discourse analysis is to concentrate on the variability between practices and their inner heterogeneity in relation to historical change and social struggles.

Although being influenced by Foucault, Fairclough criticises the Italian philosopher for missing out on the discursive and linguistic analysis of concrete texts. He argues that, on the contrary, the theory of discourse must include this microlevel. The prevalent lack of interest in microanalysis is typical not only for Foucault but also Laclau and Mouffe. However, their macroperspective can be easily supplemented by theories and methods developed by critical discourse analysts. Fairclough applies the concepts of difference and equivalence of Laclau and Mouffe as basic concurrent productive strategies in the political process and hegemonic operations at the textual level of social events. "Elements (words, phrases, etc.) are constantly being combined and divided in the text; prior combinations and separations are constantly being subverted. The point that texts are constantly combining some elements and dividing others is a rather obvious one. But what I am suggesting is that we see these processes as part of the textual moment of the social process of classification."<sup>29</sup> Classification together with categorisation is, in turn, seen as an elementary social process shaping how one thinks and acts as a social actor. From my point of view, both classification and categorisation can be interpreted in terms of functions of discourse or ideology and discursive practices in terms of material effects of ideology. Discursive practices are both constitutive and transformational, both conservative and progressive, all of them being embedded in a social milieu, rooted in and oriented towards material structures, be they language, discourse, political institutions, or economic processes. Their materiality emerges from the definition of discourse whose immaterial dimension is inseparable from its

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<sup>28</sup> Fairclough (2020), p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Fairclough (2003), pp. 100-101.

material effects. I think that Fairclough's problematic point of differentiation between the discursive and non-discursive domains can be overcome through the recognition that everything is discursive since one can hardly deal with the opposite attitude in the empirical world.

### 2.3.3 *Discourse and ideology*

Ideology was investigated by a wide array of authors of different mindsets. Among the most prominent theorists, one can mention Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Émile Durkheim, Karl Mannheim, György Lukács, Antonio Gramsci, or Louis Althusser. Among the critical discourse theorists, it is van Dijk who attempted to formulate a comprehensive theory of ideology. He considers ideology to be the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group: "This means that ideologies allow people, as group members, to organise the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, *for them*, and to act accordingly."<sup>30</sup> The author identifies ideologies with a type of intersubjectively shared mental representations emerging from conflicts of interests between different individuals and groups in society. Ideologies are necessarily connected with dominance, and they can be seen as a modality of power and a crucial element of identity-building process, as well as social coherence and organisation. They exercise control over their epistemic community, contributing to the legitimacy of the values, order, and the concrete symbolic world as a whole through the rules of discourse but also ideological institutions or apparatuses. Van Dijk points to the historical experience, which shows that ideologies are usually invented by a limited group or elite and gradually spread throughout society. Such an origin, nevertheless, does not contradict its social, collective character because social sharing is the condition for reproduction and expansion. Van Dijk insists on that ideology cannot be reduced to discourse.<sup>31</sup> However, this perspective is based on the assumption according to which discourse is reduced to a textual level. On the contrary, together with Laclau and Mouffe do I opine that discourse is the structure and environment within which texts and individual communicative events only emerge. Even though I agree that the distinction between ideology and discourse may be justified, I perceive ideology as a kind of discourse which is typical of a high degree of comprehensiveness and complexity, sedimentation, objectivity, and power, and thus social relevance. If one follows the notion of ideology widespread among the CDS, it is hardly possible to identify what the ideology is and what it is not and where its boundaries lie.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> van Dijk (2000), p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> van Dijk (2000), p. 315.

<sup>32</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 66.

If ideology is a discourse *tout court*, there is also no practice beyond ideology and no ideology except by the subjects and for subjects. It is a discourse/ideology that creates subjects from individuals. Althusser used the concept of *interpellation* for this act. It is a similar process as the transformation of elements into moments by discourse in Laclau and Mouffe. Althusser criticised the old Marxist concept of ideology as a distorted quasi-reality that only embodies the class interests of the ruling class and preserves unequal relations through the production of false consciousness among the exploited. Althusser recognises the material character of ideology that manifests itself in material practices and ideological apparatus, and a prominent role of ideology in social life. In line with historical materialism, the French philosopher adopted the concept of economic base and superstructure but put greater emphasis on the latter, within which he distinguished the political-legal structure (law and state) and ideology, introducing the important concept of *ideological state apparatuses* (ISAs). These include religion, education, family, law, political systems, media, culture or trade unions, and other social organisations. ISAs are plural by definition, which emerges from the need of the dominant group to impose hegemony throughout society both in public and private spheres. The ISAs complement the *repressive state apparatus* that functions by violence while the ISAs by ideology.<sup>33</sup> Even though Althusser did not overcome the Marxist one-sidedness regarding the role of economic base and class perspectives and undervalued the possibility of the existence of competing hegemonic formations in one society akin to Gramsci, the theory of ideological state apparatuses sheds light on the implicit mechanisms of dominance, control, and repression in concrete political systems. Together with Althusser, I disagree with the Marxist notion of ideology as a false consciousness, and the inevitable distinction between ideology and knowledge for the latter is as discursive as ideology and their characteristic features are shaped by specific historical conditions, social context, and their use.

## 2.4 Historical sociology

Interest in civilisations, their development, and interactions can be found in many scholarly disciplines. Max Weber not only recognised the enormous role of religion, which is one of the keystones of civilisations, for the character of social and economic development, but also conducted a comparative sociological research of different civilisations, postulating the existence of multiple capitalisms. August Comte and Émile Durkheim marked sociology as a science of civilisation, while Norbert Elias defined civilisation in terms of control over both

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<sup>33</sup> Althusser (2014), pp. 243-245.

external and internal nature as well as the social environment, thus coming to the same conclusion as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, one of the fundamental texts of critical theory. The concept of civilisation within historical sociology was increasingly defined in pluralist terms, rehabilitating different models and traditions.<sup>34</sup> The pluralist perspective was applied by such authors as Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Julius Evola, William McNeill, Benjamin Nelson, Fernand Braudel, and Paul Kennedy. Analyses of civilisations and cultures as specific and important social entities were also frequent among the Russians starting from Nikolai Danilevskii, Konstantin Leont'ev, Pitirim Sorokin, and ending with Eurasianism both in its classical and postclassical phases. Quite often were these investigations connected with the philosophy of history and criticism of the linear view of history, which were strongly present in European civilisation both in the premodern and modern eras.

Shmuel Eisenstadt reformulated historical sociology in civilisational terms, positioning the concept of civilisation at the very centre of his theory. Civilisation is considered a unique combination of ontological and cosmological visions defining, organising, and regulating individual social fields and interactions. These processes are strongly shaped by political, economic, and cultural elites.<sup>35</sup> Civilisation as such a pattern can thus be depicted as some mega-discourse. Eisenstadt embraced Karl Jaspers' concept of Axial Age during which major civilisations emerged as specific social entities. The axial civilisations gave birth to a permanent struggle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, which is a determinative antagonism for the historical dynamics. For the first time in history, the Axial Age and its achievements brought about the possibility of conscious ordering of societies, which was a decisive moment in further social development. Interestingly, Eisenstadt conceptualises the epoch of modernity as the Second Axial Age, while modernity itself as a peculiar civilisation with its own cultural and institutional programme and symbolic world.<sup>36</sup>

Modernity radicalised the vision of an active and autonomous human agency in the construction of the world. It entailed the naturalisation of man, society, and nature, autonomy of will, and dominance of reason together with an extraordinarily high degree of reflexivity, which encouraged an emancipatory ethos, intensified social dynamics, and politicisation of all spheres of life. Modernity brought strong social conflicts, created new dividing lines, and led to the emergence of grand ideologies. At the same time, it is ripe with inner contradictions—between totalising and

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<sup>34</sup> Arnason (2004), pp. 104-115.

<sup>35</sup> Eisenstadt (2000), p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Eisenstadt (2001), p. 327.

pluralistic conceptions of the modernist programme, between reflexivity and the active reshaping of both nature and society, between control and autonomy, equality and liberty, neutrality and charismatisation of state power, negative and positive liberty, democracy and liberal rule of law, democracy and capitalism, transcendental and secular, universal and particular, instrumental rationality and creativity. The list of antinomies is, moreover, much more extensive than this brief outline. Despite the fact that modernity originated in Western Europe, it spread globally through colonialism and neocolonialism, being intertwined with the development of capitalism. At the same time, the expansion of modernity was accompanied by different adaptation strategies by non-Western civilisations, and thus multiple development and modernisation models. Modernity has evolved as *multiple modernity*.

Eisenstadt's conception was followed and developed by Arnason. Icelandic sociologist and philosopher sees modernity as a constellation rather than a system. In this perspective, one can see a distance from mainstream sociological theories in the head with structural functionalism. According to Arnason, the modern constellation is based upon the permanent expansion and transformation of the capitalist economic system paired with the concurrent endeavours to adapt capitalism to different, local-based state-building strategies. In terms of my research, it is of special importance that he applied the civilisational approach to Communism in general and the Soviet realities in particular. A wide range of authors of different provenance were concerned with the essential question of the nature of the Communist systems. While Talcott Parsons as a representative of structural functionalism denied the peculiarities of the Soviet model, Jürgen Habermas or Alain Touraine recognised the autonomy of the Soviet modernity. The same attitude applies to Eisenstadt and Arnason. From Arnason's point of view, the Soviet model combined modern and traditional elements, domestic and external, putting economic development and industrialisation, organisational and technological upgrading of state power at the centre of the socialist construction programme. All these goals are characteristic of modernity. The core of the Soviet modernity was the expansion of rationality (adopted from the Western model) and its concurrent coordination and enhancement, the latter being aimed at overcoming the structural flaws of the Western modernity. Structural conflicts, contradictions, and antagonisms were to be transcended through central planning, party-state organisation, and science-ideology.<sup>37</sup>

It seems to me that it made the prospective reforms including the introduction of market mechanisms difficult, for it would have been perceived as undermining the vision of the

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<sup>37</sup> Arnason (1995), p. 43.

superiority of the Soviet modernity free of capitalist fragmentation. The Soviet model merged the Russian tradition of the revolution from above as the principal state-building strategy with the revolution as a path to emancipation and liberation. The people's energy and initiative, rid of capitalist exploitation, and obsolete socioeconomic forms, were to be dealt with a combination of control and mobilisation. "Central planning was to be reconciled with unfettered technological progress, party sovereignty with active but guided participation, and immutable doctrinal principles with unlimited growth of scientific knowledge."<sup>38</sup> The project of Soviet model was to be a rational response to the structural crisis of Western modernity. It carried out a rapid industrialisation but due to the rigid ideological framework and insufficient level of reflexivity—despite multiple adjustments and reformulations in response to the symptoms of crisis or external challenges—the Soviets failed to go beyond the Stalinist modernisation pattern successfully.

Arnason highlights the *primacy of politics* in the Soviet system that existed notwithstanding the Marxist teaching on the decisive role of the economic base, calling the model an "anti-economy".<sup>39</sup> The accent on politics was typical of the Communist regimes worldwide, which strengthened the role of ideology. In contrast, reforming the existing Communist regimes led to a stronger role for the economy and greater autonomy for economic subjects. Arnason's observation about the primacy of politics thus coincides with my theoretical background. But it also corresponds with social anthropological research conducted by Chris Hann who concludes that the Eurasian societies have tended to embed economy in a socio-political framework, giving priority a community to individuals. From his perspective, the socialist countries across Eurasia only followed ancient Eurasian patterns whose foundations were laid by agrarian empires of the Axial Age.<sup>40</sup> One can add that these findings are in accordance with geopolitical theories that distinguish between continental Eurasia and maritime powers. The difference between the two poles could be conceptualised in terms of the primacy of politics or economy in this context.

In addition, continuities between socialist systems and traditional formations manifested themselves in the adoption and redefinition of imperial patterns. The French Revolution dismantled the *ancien régime*, but culminated with an attempt to establish an imperial unity in Europe. The October Revolution was a radical negation of Russia's imperial past but resulted in at least a partial restructuring of imperial forms in a modernist, revolutionary, Soviet way: "Social,

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<sup>38</sup> Arnason (2000), p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> Arnason (1993), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Hann (2016), pp. 3-4.

political and cultural revolutions which broke out within collapsing empires overpowered by the global dynamics of modernisation, but led to the rebuilding of imperial structures on new foundations, under the leadership of new elites and through the mobilisation of new social forces.”<sup>41</sup> The revival of elements from the prerevolutionary epoch both in the Soviet Union and China evolved in peculiar models of modernity, influenced by the long-term civilisational trajectories. Such an interpretation could be found already in the 1930s when Sidney and Beatrice Webbs called the Soviet Union a unique civilisation in their book titled *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*.<sup>42</sup> After the fall of the USSR, Stephen Kotkin conceptualised Stalinism in a similar way in his *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*.<sup>43</sup> In addition, references to the construction of a peculiar socialist civilisation were commonplace in the speeches of Chinese leaders.<sup>44</sup> The Communist Party of China (CPC) went further by passing the *Resolution on Some Important Issues Concerning Strengthening the Construction of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation* in 1996.<sup>45</sup> The ongoing development of socialism with Chinese characteristics has strengthened the tendency towards the conception of the Chinese model as a unique civilisation. The 2021 communiqué approved by the CPC Central Committee explicitly speaks of “a new form of human civilisation”.<sup>46</sup>

The practice thus shows the relevance of the civilisational turn in historical and social research. According to Eisenstadt does the analysis of social change have to allow for contingency, structure, and culture as essentials of social interaction.<sup>47</sup> I think that the combination of Eisenstadtian civilisational paradigm and constructivism-based discourse theories is a fruitful one since it puts discursive structures, social dynamics, and struggles for hegemony into a long-term pattern of civilisational development trajectories, embedding Laclau and Mouffe’s radical pluralism, indefiniteness, and contingency in a relatively stable historical framework.

## 2.5 Methodology and methods

If the methodology is considered a theory of how research should be conducted to generate knowledge and which methods correspond to the theoretical background as well as comply with

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<sup>41</sup> Arnason (2003), p. 309.

<sup>42</sup> Webb & Webb (1935).

<sup>43</sup> Kotkin (1995).

<sup>44</sup> Deng (1985), p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Dynon (2008), p. 93.

<sup>46</sup> Lukin (2021).

<sup>47</sup> Eisenstadt (2000), p. 19.

research goals, then methods can be seen as concrete techniques for collecting and selecting data and conducting to plausible interpretations.

### 2.5.1 Research process

Wodak and Meyer present some methodological remarks within the CDA that are appropriate for my research and can supplement the theoretical grounds. In general, they depict the research process as follows: theory → formulation of research questions → data selection and collection → analysis of data → interpretation. Theory, however, should be neither isolated from practice nor excessively speculative. It needs to include both ontological and epistemological components, without which its role remains dubious. Conditions and boundaries of knowledge must be defined, the problem of objectivity and subjectivity of knowledge addressed, and the role of the subject conceptualised. The epistemology of the theory of discourse is necessarily constructivist. It should be stressed that data are not theory-neutral for their choice, collection, and interpretation depend on the theoretical perspective. Wodak and Meyer describe the procedure of the CDA as a hermeneutic process in opposition to causal explanations typical of the natural sciences. The relation between data and theory is dialectical in the sense that theory affects the selection and interpretation of data, while the latter subsequently influences the theory itself. Data collection, moreover, does not need to be finished before analysis, but may continue during the analysis and interpretation process.<sup>48</sup>

Fairclough distinguishes three levels of analysis: (1) discursive practice, (2) text, and (3) social practice. Discursive practices are addressed through the analysis of the discourses and genres that are articulated within the process of production, distribution, consumption, and interpretation of the text in question, whereas textual analysis focuses on linguistic structures and features. The third level is concerned with the effects of discursive practice on the existing order of discourse (conservative or transformatory) and social context as such. The concept of *order of discourse* is used for the sum of all genres, styles, discourses, and discursive practices in a specific social field, for instance, politics.<sup>49</sup> “An order of discourse can be seen as the discursive facet of the contradictory and unstable equilibrium which constitutes a hegemony, and the articulation and rearticulation of orders of discourse is correspondingly one stake in hegemonic struggle.”<sup>50</sup> Within the analysis of discursive practices should attention be paid to interdiscursivity, conditions of discursive practice including the purpose of the text, target

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<sup>48</sup> Wodak & Meyer (2016), pp. 14-22.

<sup>49</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), pp. 61-64.

<sup>50</sup> Fairclough (2020), p. 93.

audience, medium through which the text is conveyed and distributed, political and institutional contexts. Textual analysis focuses on several basic aspects: vocabulary, grammar, text structure, form of utterances, modality, coherence, intertextuality, representation of social events, and other phenomena. The third stage of analysis is then to help to explain why the discursive practice is as it is in relation to broader contexts beyond the text itself including the social conditions of the concrete communicative event, its connection with power relations and hegemonic formations, the way in which it reproduces the *status quo* or contributes to changes in the order of discourse.<sup>51</sup>

In this research project, I do not conduct a linguistically-oriented discursive analysis, nevertheless, some categories and concepts presented by Fairclough can be used. It applies especially to his three-level notion of analysis distinguishing between discursive practices, texts, and social practices as well as the order of discourse if we adopt the redefinition of Jørgensen and Phillips according to which the order of discourse is a conceptualisation of different discourses in the same field. Both authors suggest to choose a single order of discourse to investigate, which enables us to identify individual discourses competing over domination, their specific features, the way how they make meaning, and how they fix it. “The starting point is that the discourses, by representing reality in one particular way rather than in other possible ways, constitute subjects and objects in particular ways, create boundaries between the true and the false and make certain types of action relevant and others unthinkable. It is in this sense that discourse is constitutive of the social.”<sup>52</sup> Such a method sheds light on the role and content of floating signifiers that are particularly important moments in the chains of equivalence and hegemonic struggles. In this dissertation, the order of discourse is Soviet politics within which individual discourses (particularly neo-Stalinist, neo-Leninist, and liberal socialist) compete for a hegemony that would enable one to fix a specific meaning of socialism. The analysis of individual discourses is based on an original typology.

### 2.5.2 *Typology of Soviet discourses*

The discourse analysis is focused on the *political* order of discourse, in line with the notion of the political as ontology of the social (in philosophical and theoretical terms) and the consensual historical (empirical) observation that Russian/Soviet political culture was always leader-dominated while Soviet ideology was characteristic of rigid flexibility, that is, the general line

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<sup>51</sup> Fairclough (2020), pp. 232-238.

<sup>52</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), p. 119.

could change but it remained binding.<sup>53</sup> These assumptions enable me to choose discourses as the primary object of investigation. Strategies of fixation of meanings through differences between them and relations to nodal points can be analysed based on communicative acts whose relevance and significance were crucial in the historical conditions in question. The poststructuralist and constructivist attitude towards discourses entails a focus on chains of equivalence between individual moments of discourse and the related field of discursivity, which encompasses excluded meanings. It is a matter of fact that individual Soviet discourses often used the same nodal points and elements, but defined their meaning in a different, even contradictory way. The nodal points might thus be perceived as floating signifiers at the same time because they are prone to change their content depending on hegemonic operations by individual actors. In any case, the landscape of Soviet political discourses was dynamic, for these were changing over time, interacting with each other and affecting one another. Full positivity of set meanings was hardly reached, especially in the late Soviet period, which became typical of growing clashes between political actors and hegemonic formations.

The basic precondition for conducting discourse analysis is to define concrete discourses. The literature offers several typologies of Soviet discourses, including, but not limited to, those elaborated by such authors as Brutents, Cohen, Lukin, and Shliapentokh. Despite their differences, they share an effort to overcome one-sided, misleading, and untenable interpretations of the Soviet politics and reforms through the prism of a struggle between reformers and conservatives, which was largely spread by liberal socialists. Some of the aforementioned typologies are in-depth and comprehensive (Cohen, Lukin, Shliapentokh) while others are rather sketchy (Brutents). The following table sums them up with the first column indicating the discourses used in the dissertation:

<b>Zemánek (2024)</b>	<b>Brutents (2005)</b>	<b>Cohen (2011)</b>	<b>Lukin (2021)</b>	<b>Shliapentokh (1988)</b>
Neo-Stalinism	Conservatives	Neo-Stalinist reactionaries	Bureaucratic Communism	Conservatives Neo-Stalinists
Neo-Leninism	Socialists	Conservatives	Rightist	Liberal Marxists
Liberal Socialism	Democratic socialists	Anti-Stalinist reformers	Communism	

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<sup>53</sup> Cohen (2011), p. 73; Sakwa (1998), p. 174.

Cohen argues that at least three discourses (“parties”) coexisted within the CPSU since the 1960s. Neo-Stalinist reactionaries opposed Khrushchevite reforms and called for tightening party and state control over society and restoring ideological orthodoxy. Conservatives tended to preserve the status quo that emerged after Stalin’s death while opposing both the return to Stalinism and Khrushchev’s adventurism, as well as any radical reforms. Anti-Stalinist reforms, in turn, called for deeper reforms and liberalisation in political and economic fields. According to Cohen, conservatives and anti-Stalinist reformers were prepared to cooperate to enhance reform. Ligachev, as the leading representative of the former group, supported Gorbachev’s reforms while trying to moderate them.<sup>54</sup>

Lukin formulates a universal typology of the Communist regimes (discourses) with the ideological factor in the centre, differentiating between bureaucratic, leftist, and rightist Communism. The leftist Communism is not relevant for the period under investigation since no relevant political actors advocated the strategy of War Communism in the late Soviet Union. The Russian author identifies the period since Stalin until Chernenko with bureaucratic Communism, depicting it by means of planned economy, full socialisation, and leading role of party-state bodies. In contrast, rightist Communism is typical of the limited role of market, material incentives, the limited existence of private ownership, and the leading role of party-state bodies. As such, it corresponds to Lenin’s NEP or Dengism in China. Lukin asserts that the rightist Communists considered legitimate and appropriate to use non-socialist methods in building the material base for a later transition to Communism.<sup>55</sup>

Shliapentokh defines three discourses in Soviet politics and society. Conservatives are identified with Brezhnevism with its stress on the power of bureaucracy and stability of the system in the core. The conservative tendency towards stability weakened the efficiency and productivity of socioeconomic processes. Conservative discourse gave birth to Soviet patriotism and the cult of state.<sup>56</sup> According to Shliapentokh, neo-Stalinism is an antidemocratic and elitist ideology which combines class attitudes with a businesslike approach to socioeconomic realities. It created certain opportunities for innovative and unorthodox policies with the aim of overcoming existing negative features while strengthening discipline and order.<sup>57</sup> The exile scholar considers Andropov a representative of neo-Stalinism in contrast to Gorbachev’s liberal Marxism, building

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<sup>54</sup> Cohen (2011), pp. 71-73.

<sup>55</sup> Lukin (2021), pp. 69-70.

<sup>56</sup> Shliapentokh (1988), pp. 90-97.

<sup>57</sup> Shliapentokh (1988), pp. 109-114.

on Khrushchev's heritage. Liberal Marxism upholds positive attitudes towards individual economic activities, a certain role of the market in the economy, and aversion to egalitarianism. The negative perspective on party-state bureaucracy is accompanied by an accent on people's participation in management and control.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, Brutents presents a classification including conservatives, socialists, democratic socialists, liberals, and conformists. Interestingly, the long-term official of the CPSU Secretariat argues that socialists were adherents of the Chinese model.<sup>59</sup> His sketchy analysis, however, is not sufficient for serious application without further elaboration. The above typologies have their advantages and disadvantages as well as points of conjunction, but none of them fits the present research task *in toto*. In structural terms, I agree with Brutents and Cohen as far as their triple classification is concerned. The substantial weakness of Lukin's and Shliapentokh's typology is that they fail to elaborate a more nuanced perspective on what I call neo-Leninism and liberal socialism, which prevents them from identifying innovative, reform concepts and policies in the pre-1985 period. In addition, I am reluctant to use the term "conservative" to define Soviet discourses because its meanings and connotations are too ambiguous and biased.

Based on these typologies and my own research, I formulate an original typology with three political discourses at its core, neo-Stalinism, neo-Leninism, and liberal socialism. These were the dominant discourses in Soviet politics between 1978 and 1991. Their position was, of course, changing over time with neo-Stalinism safeguarding its hegemony until 1983 when it was replaced by neo-Leninism. The latter lost its privileged position in 1988, but it remained strong enough to challenge the liberal socialist discourse which took the lead in the meantime. Furthermore, individual discourses were able to preserve relevance in the chosen areas even after their general hegemony was over. A typical example is the quite strong continuity of external and economic policies throughout the perestroika period. The boundaries between discourses were, moreover, often blurred. Concurrently, mutual overlap and affinities allowed political actors to cooperate and establish specific hegemonic formations, which dynamised socioeconomic developments.

Soviet discourses are analysed at three levels—at the level of political and economic models (internal perspective) and external model. These areas are of key importance for the construction and structure of individual discourses and include their nodal points. Such a method reveals the

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<sup>58</sup> Shliapentokh (1988), pp. 126, 145.

<sup>59</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 71.

permanent struggle for meaning and full positivity of signs in discourses. The principal nodal point can be seen in the sign “socialism”. The meanings ascribed to socialism in neo-Stalinist, neo-Leninist, and liberal socialist discourses are different. These differences are what matters in the present work. Not less importantly, this typology does not aspire to universality. It is the result of historical research and philosophical considerations and assumptions and their dialectical interaction during the research itself. The typology is designed to specific historical conditions of the late Soviet era with respect to the Chinese context in general and the post-Mao reform model in particular. The latter is a reference point with which Soviet discourses are compared. The comparative method enables the identification of common points as well as differences and subsequent explanation of the acceptance or rejection of the Chinese reform model by Soviet leaders. In the dissertation, the Chinese reform model—Dengism—is defined through the following features, which are derived from historical research: a radical economic reform combining market with planning, the coexistence of different forms of ownership, limited political reform safeguarding the ruling role of the Communist Party and authoritarian governance, preference for economic development to both ideological orthodoxy and politics, de-ideologisation of external relations, peaceful coexistence and engagement with capitalist countries, abandonment of the idea of export of socialist revolution and anti-imperialism, recognition of a peculiar Chinese modernity and socialist civilisation paired with the revival of prerevolutionary patterns, gradualism, experimentation and pragmatism.

The table below summarises the most distinctive features of the Soviet political discourses in political, economic, and external terms along with the concept of goal, priority to either politics (ideology) or economy, the universality of the model and its civilisational embeddedness and framing:

	<b>Neo-Stalinism</b>	<b>Neo-Leninism</b>	<b>Liberal socialism</b>	<b>Dengism</b>
<b>Political model</b>	Monopartism	Monopartism, limited political reform	Social democracy	Monopartism, limited political reform, Four Cardinal Principles
<b>Economic model</b>	Stalinist economy based on central planning, state ownership, monism and	Mixed economy with stress on planning, plurality of ownership forms with aversion to private	Mixed economy, a plurality of ownership forms including the private one, economic democracy	Mixed economy, plurality of ownership forms, Four Modernisations, xiaokang

	permanent perfection	ownership, economic democracy		
<b>External model</b>	Strong anti-imperialism, socialist, class attitude, peaceful coexistence and détente, socialist internationalism, hierarchical ICM	Moderate anti-imperialism, class attitude, peaceful coexistence and détente, socialist internationalism, and horizontal ICM	Globalist internationalism, panhuman values, and global perestroika, engagement with capitalist countries	Peaceful coexistence, engagement with capitalist countries, opening up
<b>Priority</b>	Politics	Economy	Politics	Economy
<b>Goal</b>	Communism	Communism	Socialism	Communism
<b>Civilisational embeddedness</b>	Soviet modernity	Soviet modernity	Westernism	Chinese modernity
<b>Universality</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No

Aside from these three discourses, there was another discourse which was very amorphous depending on the context in which it appeared. In a sense, it is of inferior nature because it radicalises elements of other discourses and flexibly coincides with or opposes them without forming an independent discursive structure. This kind of discourse can be called *populist*.<sup>60</sup> Populism existed in multiple forms in the late Soviet period starting from leftist criticism of neo-Leninism and liberal socialism and ending with nationalism and neoliberalism. Even though it never succeeded in assuming power in the CPSU and at the union level before August 1991, populists capitalised on the existing problems and used the opportunities brought about by reforms to undermine the hegemonic discourse and party and state structures. Moreover, populism found its leader in Boris El'tsin, who advocated left-wing opposition to neo-Leninist perestroika and subsequently resorted to nationalist and neoliberal policies. These transformed themselves into a full-fledged discourse in the last months of the existence of the Soviet Union, taking the lead after the failure of GKChP. Soviet neoliberalism refused the Communist past and Soviet modernity while transferring Western political, economic, and social patterns and values

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<sup>60</sup> See Abromeit, Chesterton, Marotta & Norman (2016).

to Russia, which was becoming the successor state of the USSR.<sup>61</sup> Relevant aspects of the populist discourse(s) in 1978–1991 are analysed, where necessary.

The hegemony of individual Soviet discourses was established or reaffirmed at congresses, conferences, plenums, and other high-level events of the CPSU. Communicative acts, predominantly speeches, articles and correspondence of general secretaries, members of Politburo, prominent officials of the Secretariat, and ministers, therefore, enable me to inquire into the discourses and identify nodal points, chains of equivalence, and elements present in the concrete articulations. Hence, the choice of texts and their authors is far from casual. Despite a high degree of discursive homogeneity between individual actors, certain differences in the style of the authors can be discerned at the level of language, as well as topics and interpretation. It applied to the entire period under investigation including the neo-Stalinist one. For instance, Ustinov's style was often "baroque", impassioned and full of quasi-religious vocabulary ("immortal Leninist teaching", "Bright Holiday" = anniversary of the October Revolution, "sacred duty") in contrast to Romanov's factual and businesslike style and Grishin's zealous and hardline one. Individual style, presence or absence of some concepts, and use of language frequently indicate preferences and orientation of politicians. Naturally, the use of language and topics changes depending on the concrete situation and audience. However, a sufficient number of texts enables me to identify the author's longer-time preferences and abstract from calculated adjustments. The typology-based attitude does not ignore the evolution within a discourse itself. Changes are taken into account and put into a broader political context through other primary and secondary sources in the related chapters.

### 2.5.3 *Validity of research and triple triangulation*

Finally, the problem of *research validity*, which is interconnected with a *triangulation* method, should be discussed here. The constructivist epistemology postulates a contingent, discursively produced, and context-dependent character of knowledge. Scientific knowledge is not an exception. Hence, it cannot produce a neutral description or representation of the world and the subject matter in question. Representation as a perfectly objective *mimesis* is impossible. Scientific knowledge is not the final arbiter of truth, but only one single discourse among many, it is a peculiar kind of knowledge with specific rules that ought to be respected. Researcher should, therefore, be explicit as far as his/her theoretical background and practical goals are concerned.

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<sup>61</sup> Timofeyev (2004), pp. 92-93.

However, the question arises as to how research can be validated under such conditions. There is no consensus on the validity criteria among scholars. Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell introduce the criteria of *coherence* and *fruitfulness* when the latter implies the production of new knowledge, new types of thinking, and action. Karen Tracy adds a pragmatist-like criterion of *helpful problem framing*, which assesses the research according to its benefits to the recipients. Fairclough, in turn, sets the criteria of *transparency* (clarity about the author's approach, sincerity towards recipients), *comprehensiveness* (research questions to be answered), and *solidness* (sufficient range of data and methods).<sup>62</sup> I adhere to these criteria in my qualitative research—the latter shall be coherent, consistent, solid and transparent and bring a fresh perspective that can be discussed by and shared in the scientific community and beyond.

The validity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the present research are strengthened by triple *triangulation*. The use of triangulation offsets the possible weakness emerging from a limited use of archival materials as well as the necessarily subjective and interpretative character of both primary and secondary sources.<sup>63</sup> Knowing this, I have opted to multiply, first, theoretical paradigms and methods within a common, noncontradictory theoretical discourse, second, different sets of data sources, and, third, different research perspectives. This chapter shows the theoretical and methodological assumptions and roots of the dissertation, including constructivism, pragmatism, postmodernism and poststructuralism, discourse theories, and historical sociology. The data are derived from four main source clusters: (1) archival documents; (2) official materials, speeches, and relevant period publications; (3) diaries and memoirs; (4) secondary literature. Importantly, data from all categories are largely cross-checked to produce a more balanced interpretation. The last triangulation applies to different research perspectives based on different sets of research questions. The analysis starts with relevant socioeconomic factors against the background of Soviet modernity, continues with China's role in Soviet discourses, as well as policy choices and decision-making in line with a constructivist approach to international relations, and ends with the discourse analysis of neo-Stalinism, neo-Leninism and liberal socialism and subsequent research into political and socioeconomic development with a focus on institutions and political actors.<sup>64</sup> This working procedure and combination of methods and perspectives result in an explanation of the relationship between Soviet leaders and Dengism at the level of discourse, institutions and actors.

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<sup>62</sup> Jørgensen & Phillips (2002), pp. 141-142.

<sup>63</sup> Blaikie (1991).

<sup>64</sup> For the constructivist interpretation of international relations and politics see Wendt (1992; 1999).

### 3 Soviet and Chinese modernity: socioeconomic variables

The development of the Soviet Union was affected by multiple grand factors. The key to analysing and explaining the socioeconomic dynamics and reform strategies can be found in *Stalinism* which—unlike the short period of New Economic Policy (NEP) and even shorter period of War Communism—played a leading part in the entire Soviet history.<sup>65</sup> This fact largely influenced politico-economic strategies, reform policies, as well as relations towards China and applicability of Dengism in the Soviet Union.

#### 3.1 Stalinist model of socialism

The implementation of Stalinist model of socialism is often interpreted as the “second revolution”.<sup>66</sup> Whereas some authors consider Stalinism as a deviation, which is in full accordance with the liberal socialist discourse, others adopt a different stance perceiving Stalinism as a legitimate form of Bolshevism in the context of the failure of the world socialist revolution.<sup>67</sup> Despite its allegiance to Marxism with its theory of economic base and social superstructure and the determining role of the former, Stalinism can be seen as “anti-economy”, in other words, as a model based on the primacy of politics which, in turn, corresponds with the Russian tradition of Bolshevism.<sup>68</sup> Aron goes so far as to assert that the dominance of politics over economy was absolute.<sup>69</sup>

Stalinism emerged under specific historical circumstances of the power struggle with alternative discourses represented, first of all, by Lev Trotskii and Nikolai Bukharin, which must have influenced the nature of the emerging Stalinism. The planned economy based on directive-administrative methods of management under the leadership of the ruling party, state dirigism, industrialisation and coercive mobilisation, the absence of private ownership, market mechanisms (with certain exceptions) and unemployment, state monopoly on external trade, and a strict ideological framework belong to the most prominent characteristics of the Stalinist model. These socioeconomic and political peculiarities addressed and reflected the needs of the economically backward country and the priorities set by the ruling party. Shakhnazarov argues

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<sup>65</sup> Daniels (1993), p. 84.

<sup>66</sup> Reiman (1987). The same term is applied to perestroika by authors like Tat'iana Zaslavskaja (1990).

<sup>67</sup> Cohen (1985), p. 48; Lukin (2021), p. 73.

<sup>68</sup> Arnason (1993), p. 207; Berdiaev (1955).

<sup>69</sup> Aron (2012), p. 207.

that Stalinism was a totalitarian system based on mass terror and people's revolutionary enthusiasm. At the same time, it constituted a vital, stable, sustainable, and well-governed model securing basic needs.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, even vocal anti-Stalinists such as Aleksandr Iakovlev admitted that Stalin's rule was enthusiastically supported by a large part of the Soviet society.<sup>71</sup>

Vinogradov concludes that the model was suitable for the developing countries to catch up with the capitalist economies, which helps to explain the popularity and applicability of the model in many of them.<sup>72</sup> Soviet historian and sociologist Vladimir Shliapentokh, who is considered one of the founders of Soviet sociology and later emigrated to the U.S., recognised some advantages of Stalinism. According to the exile scholar, it enabled the Soviets to carry out modernisation and reach the status of a superpower.<sup>73</sup> "If the NEP had evolved into a post-revolutionary 'Thermidor', the country would have been unable to carry out rapid industrialisation. It would have been impossible to create, in such a short period of time, a large military industry which could have provided the army with the necessary tanks, planes, cannons (including the famous Katiusha) and other weapons for the war against Germany. (...) A bourgeois Russia in the postwar period would have been unable to create nuclear weapons to match those possessed by the United States."<sup>74</sup> The same argumentation can be found in the memoirs of Gorbachev's Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov.<sup>75</sup> These achievements were, however, reached at the cost of enormous losses and violence.<sup>76</sup> Successes of the Stalinist policies including the external expansion were conditioned by the leader's authority, cult and autocratic practices which disappeared with Stalin's death and were not replaced by any similarly effective instruments instead.<sup>77</sup>

Aside from the advantages and merits, the Stalinist model suffered from serious structural weaknesses which prevailed until the Gorbachevian reforms and its collapse. While the model was effective in terms of the transition from a rural economy to an industrial one, its potential to go beyond the industrial model towards a postindustrial society and service- and consumption-oriented economy was low.<sup>78</sup> By the same token, Stalinism was effective in terms of extensive development when there was an abundance of labour force and natural resources at its disposal

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<sup>70</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 323.

<sup>71</sup> Cohen (1989), p. 37.

<sup>72</sup> Vinogradov (2010), p. 109.

<sup>73</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), p. 117.

<sup>74</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), p. 118.

<sup>75</sup> Ryzhkov (2007), p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> Conquest (2008).

<sup>77</sup> Arnason (1995), p. 51.

<sup>78</sup> Hough (1997), p. 48; Medvedev (1994), p. 9.

but it started to fail when it came to the intensive growth.<sup>79</sup> Daniels describes the fundamental problems of the model as bureaucratism, militarism, low-quality planning and management, the lack of transparency and finally a massive waste of capital, energy resources, material inputs and human potential.<sup>80</sup> These features are addressed by most scholars. Rigid central control enabled large-scale mobilisation but obstructed economic dynamics, technological progress, and innovation, which posed a substantial comparative disadvantage in relation to the capitalist countries from a long-term perspective.<sup>81</sup> The system tended to conformism due to an ossified ideological framework, being unable to evaluate and reward human work based on merits.<sup>82</sup>

Economic subjects were managed to increase production quantitatively from year to year irrespective of quality and innovation potential, and, concurrently, the enterprises were not motivated to disruptions and innovation in production because the system of bonuses and incentives disadvantaged them.<sup>83</sup> The abundance of resources and labour force in conjunction with the collective forms of ownership resulted in waste, inefficiency and low levels of labour productivity. Shlapentokh states that the Soviet industry generally consumed two to three times more resources for the production of goods in comparison with the advanced economies.<sup>84</sup> Aron adds that three times more electricity was needed for the production of a ton of copper than in West Germany.<sup>85</sup> The excessive emphasis on heavy industry and military sectors together with the suppressed inflation resulted in chronic shortages which led respected British economist Philip Hanson to christen the model a “shortage economy”.<sup>86</sup>

The internal extensive development typical of macroeconomic stability, absence of cyclical crises, gradual exhaustion of the model’s potential, and related economic stagnation contrasted with external expansion and rise in international power. It led to a paradoxical situation when the stagnating economy coexisted with the superpower geopolitics and strategic parity with the West. Stalin’s death brought about the end of the highly autocratic phase of the development of Stalinism, but the basic characteristics of the socioeconomic model survived. However, the changes in the political realm aimed at the elimination of autocracy, restoration of the power of

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<sup>79</sup> Daniels (1993), p. 63.

<sup>80</sup> Daniels (1993), pp. 180-181.

<sup>81</sup> Arnason (1993), p. 123.

<sup>82</sup> Shlapentokh (1988), p. xii.

<sup>83</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 106.

<sup>84</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), pp. 108-109.

<sup>85</sup> Aron (2012), p. 173.

<sup>86</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 29.

the party apparatus, and protection of both the leadership and rank-and-file against repression and purges undermined the pillars of the model, weakened its efficiency and obstructed any substantial adjustments.<sup>87</sup> Arnason observes that the oligarchic stabilisation entailed the end of revolutions from above among which collectivisation, industrialisation, socialisation of economy and the establishment of the “dictatorship of proletariat” by means of the leading role of the Communist Party occupied the leading place.<sup>88</sup> Oligarchisation was accompanied by a gradual degeneration of the socioeconomic model as a whole which entailed the rise of economic bureaucracy and powerful interest groups such as agro-industrial complex, the fuel-energy complex and military-industrial complex.<sup>89</sup> Viktor Pribytkov, who was an assistant to the head of the General Department Konstantin Chernenko and attended sessions of both the Politburo and the Secretariat, observes in turn that the power of the central party apparatus was “without borders” under Leonid Brezhnev.<sup>90</sup> Miller adopts quite an unambiguous attitude when he identifies the power of these interest groups as the major cause of the collapse of the economy and failure of the Gorbachevian reforms, for these actors succeeded in taking control over the CPSU, rendering it an instrument for advancing their particular interests.<sup>91</sup> Such a perspective coincides with Gorbachev’s own interpretation and remains relevant, even though the power of the economic and party bureaucracy and economic complexes should not be overestimated.

Albeit the central role of planning was typical of the Stalinist model, it was not absolute. People were allowed to change their jobs in many cases, households could buy what they wanted without allocated rations, and the state could not foresee what foreign subjects would purchase and sell within the foreign trade. Moreover, the private sector existed, however marginalised it was. Production on the rural plots was not planned and although most part of this kind of production was consumed by the households themselves, the rest could be sold on kolkhoz markets where prices were not centrally set. According to Hanson, about a quarter of the agricultural production was carried out by household plots for a long time.<sup>92</sup> Aside from these elements, the Soviet Stalinist economy tolerated the existence of shadow economy and what

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<sup>87</sup> Miller (2016), p. 56.

<sup>88</sup> Arnason (1993), p. 198.

<sup>89</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 57-58. Leonov points to the fact that despite a strong role of particular groups, the Politburo underestimated the importance of inclusion of the economic actors into decision-making. Among the Politburo members, only the prime minister was responsible for economic policies in the strict sense (Leonov, 1995, pp. 109-110).

<sup>90</sup> Pribytkov (2002), p. 57.

<sup>91</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 180-181.

<sup>92</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 13.

Khanin calls “protocapitalism”.<sup>93</sup> Shadow economy was concentrated to peripheral areas of the USSR in the Khrushchevite period but it expanded to central areas in the 1970s and by the end of that decade it may have accounted for up to 8 per cent of GDP.<sup>94</sup> The expansion of shadow economic activities was facilitated by the mitigation of repression under Brezhnev and the important role which this sector unofficially played. Analysing the genesis and development of “protocapitalism” in the Soviet Union, Khanin concludes that the shadow economy enabled a “normal”, smooth functioning of the economy as a whole through providing labour force, materials and spare parts to the SOEs under the circumstances of chronic shortages.<sup>95</sup> In other words, the shadow economy helped enterprises to meet the goals set by central planners. Before 1985, up to 50 per cent of retail services were secured by illegal work, while around 40 per cent of all purchased goods was provided by the black market.<sup>96</sup> According to different estimates, the private sector consisting of severely restricted legal and illegal activities could have generated about 10 per cent of Soviet GDP in average.<sup>97</sup> It indicates a potential for reforms along the line of market mechanisms.

### 3.2 Soviet modernisation and political system

The fundamental goals of the Communist regimes, including the Soviet and Chinese ones, were modernisation, the construction of a competitive economic base with an emphasis on industry as well as organisational and technological upgrade of state power in accordance with the principles of Marxist theory and normativity. Communist-led state-building and transformative policies can be seen as an alternative way of modernisation.<sup>98</sup> The Soviet socialism was not meant as an absolute negation of Western modernity based upon capitalism but rather as an attempt to overcome its structural flaws and imbalances. The Western model, nevertheless, remained the main starting or reference point upon which the Soviet “counter-model” was to be established. This perspective has been elaborated, for instance, by civilisational sociologists who criticise both the political theory of totalitarianism and the structural functionalist theory of modernisation in sociology while following the Weberian analyses of civilisations and the pluralist conception of modernity, which enabled them to study the Communist experiment as a peculiar

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<sup>93</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 343.

<sup>94</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 349.

<sup>95</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 350.

<sup>96</sup> Miller (2016), p. 89; Shlapentokh (1988), p. 59.

<sup>97</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Arnason (2000).

and autonomous pattern of modernity with both identical and distinct features compared to the Western model.

At a general level, the Soviet socialism was to perfect and expand rational mastery under the direction of a commanding centre within a system free of structural conflicts and related fragmentation which are inherent to capitalism.<sup>99</sup> The Soviet model merged political, economic and ideological power, establishing a vertical apparatus with the Communist Party in its core as a backbone of the whole system. Western forms of representative democracy were to be replaced by a specific combination of the direct expression of popular sovereignty and the leading role of the Communist Party.<sup>100</sup> Robinson and Sakwa describe the Soviet notion of democracy in terms of “commune democracy” whose origins can be traced back to Marx’s *Civil War in France* and Lenin’s *State and Revolution*. Commune democracy was an antithesis to Western constitutionalism and liberalism, for it foresees no separation of powers, fusion of the executive and legislation, delegation rather than representation, open rather than secret voting, and emphasis on the working class. It merges the Leninist authoritarianism embodied in the vanguard role of the Communist Party with public self-management. Such a synthesis, however, entailed serious friction and contradictoriness. “The CPSU was compelled to develop the ability of society to act independently, but it continually denied the grounds for the existence of any development that was independent of itself,” concludes Robinson.<sup>101</sup> The goals set by the Soviet regime were to be reached by means of command economy and central planning, party-state and ideological science-based orthodoxy.<sup>102</sup> Yet the suppression of internal conflicts and plurality weakened productivity and innovation while the vision of superiority of the Soviet modernity over the capitalist one made the introduction of market mechanisms very difficult, for it would open the door to fragmentation and possible imbalances. This observation helps us to understand why the Soviet leaders were so reluctant to accept a model combining command and market instruments.

The normative model of socialism with a centrally managed and democratically decentralised economy without contradictions between collective and individual interests coincided with the idea of the socialist society as a single giant industrial enterprise.<sup>103</sup> It was materialised in the homogeneity of ownership forms dominated by state ownership, hierarchical planning, the

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<sup>99</sup> Arnason (1995), p. 43.

<sup>100</sup> Sakwa (2013), p. 66.

<sup>101</sup> Robinson (1995), p. 26.

<sup>102</sup> Arnason (2000), pp. 72-73.

<sup>103</sup> Sutela (1991), pp. 7-8.

absence of autonomous markets, no division between economy and politics and united organisation of individual economic sectors.<sup>104</sup> According to Nikolai Baibakov, who was involved in the economic management since Stalin until Gorbachev, the planning was the main advantage of the socialist model.<sup>105</sup> Such a perspective can be perceived as a mainstream (Stalinist) interpretation in the Soviet Union. The Soviet pattern of economic planning was strongly influenced by a prominent Chairman of the State Planning Committee Nikolai Voznesenskii, who defined the need for quicker growth of labour productivity related to the growth of wages as the basic condition for socialist accumulation.<sup>106</sup>

The monist normative vision, which was anchored in the party programme adopted in 1919, was, nonetheless, gradually weakened. This move manifested itself both at the normative and policy levels in the post-Stalin period and was interconnected with the transformation of the Soviet system from Stalinist autocracy to post-Stalinist oligarchy. Sakwa observes that the Soviet project of modernity degenerated into the rule of a bureaucratic class, technocratism and managerialism, whose typical features were formalism, inefficiency and inability to innovate and institutionalise the inner dynamics, progress and divergent interests of individual actors.<sup>107</sup> By the same token, Lewin addresses the oligarchic nature of the Soviet political regime. Analysing the internal mechanisms of the Communist Party, the historian concludes that the rank-and-file was not engaged in policy-making and executing policies and the real power was concentrated in the hands of the highest political leaders.<sup>108</sup> Insiders confirm that decision-making was limited to a narrow circle of people, especially in the Politburo and the Secretariat which managed individual departments of the Central Committee. While the “big politics” was carried out at the highest echelons of power, the actual execution of decisions was in the hands of *obkoms*, that is, regional party committees.<sup>109</sup>

The weakness of legal procedures and formal institutionalised mechanisms within the ruling party made the realisation of power less transparent while a substantial role was played by informal practices and channels. As Sakwa aptly puts it: “Power came from the ability to manipulate personnel; authority came from success in policy. The leader’s first priority was to

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<sup>104</sup> Sutela (1991), p. 131.

<sup>105</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 112.

<sup>107</sup> Sakwa (2013), pp. 66-67.

<sup>108</sup> Lewin (1988), p. 125.

<sup>109</sup> Nenashev (1993), pp. 75-77.

build a power base.”<sup>110</sup> The role of the leader was irreplaceable both symbolically and practically, irrespective of the fact that after Stalin’s death the leader had to exert his power based upon a consensus within the highest echelons, taking into account the vested interests of the powerful groups.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, the leader could radically shape the personnel policy at different levels, dismiss the Politburo members and appoint his favourites to the decisive positions in order to secure his power. The internal rules as well as the principle of democratic centralism made the chances to remove the leader very slim. Indeed, it occurred only once in the whole Soviet history when Nikita Khrushchev was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev. The leader was the symbol of order, unity, and legitimacy, and references to Politburo served as a kind of legitimisation strategy.<sup>112</sup> Authors of both totalitarianism and revisionism came to an agreement that the Soviet structure of power followed the prerevolutionary patterns of Russian leader-dominated political culture.<sup>113</sup>

The role of the leader and the character of the Soviet system as such has been an object of controversy not only in academia. The range of opinions has been very wide, stretching from monist totalitarianism to pluralism. Theorists of totalitarianism could hardly agree with Jerry Hough who proposed the concept of institutional pluralism to describe the variety of interests in the Soviet society and the power of economic bureaucracy and interest groups within the system. Hough is not the only scholar who accentuates Soviet pluralism. While Robert Daniels speaks about a participatory bureaucracy, Harold Gordon Skilling—about the pluralism of elites.<sup>114</sup> Hough does not deny the authoritarian nature of the Soviet state either but argues that in the Brezhnevite period most policy issues were collectively debated, power was dispersed more than before, the scope for individual differences widened and repression was eased.<sup>115</sup> Houghian pluralist perspective is refused by Brown, nonetheless, the latter historian asserts that the post-Stalin Soviet system can be considered neither totalitarian nor monolithic. He concludes that there were different groups with different interests and ambitions indeed, but they were not institutionalised and formalised.<sup>116</sup> Such a balanced view is shared by Sakwa alike.

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<sup>110</sup> Sakwa (1998), p. 153.

<sup>111</sup> Cherniaev (2008), p. 549; Sakwa (1998), p. 154.

<sup>112</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), pp. 82-83.

<sup>113</sup> Cohen (2011), p. 75; Pipes (2002).

<sup>114</sup> Daniels (1993), p. 60; Hough (1977), pp. 22-23.

<sup>115</sup> Hough (1977), p. viii.

<sup>116</sup> Brown (2007), p. 137.

Hough's sociological analyses of Soviet society show the differentiation of the elites. The dividing lines were horizontal rather than vertical in accordance with the long-term strategic priorities giving preferential treatment to heavy industry and defence. Privileges related to the high-level positions were not distributed evenly but according to the abovementioned sectoral priorities, which made the social status of employees in heavy industry better than the top workers in services. The dividing line also went between the central ministries and provincial bureaucracy. Under Brezhnev, the middle level of the power verticle, that is, ministries, was gaining increasing power to the detriment of the highest party bodies on one hand and the local party representatives on the other.<sup>117</sup> This shift was a side effect of the ongoing oligarchisation and internal degeneration of the system, which Shlapentokh depicts as gradual privatisation: "With little control from above, many Soviet apparatchiks lost practically any serious concern for the interests of the state and made all their decisions based on their own private goals. Unlike the previous generation of managers, Brezhnev's people were not only careerists but also people who were strongly involved in the accumulation of goods and thinking about a type of independence from the state."<sup>118</sup>

It was particularly this segment of society, that is, a part of the elites, which was immediately interested in the rise of consumption, access to the West, and larger autonomy and freedoms. Consequently, the most serious challenge to the Soviet authoritarianism was hidden within the elite itself. From such a perspective, Gorbachevian reformers' interpretation of the bureaucracy and the party apparatus as the major obstacle for reform policies seems unconvincing and calculated.

### 3.3 Soviet society

From the official point of view, the Soviet society was composed of only two non-antagonistic classes—the working class and peasantry—and one stratum, that is, intelligentsia. The dynamics of social stratification reflected the overall socioeconomic development, industrialisation, urbanisation as well as a rising level of education. Based on the official statistics, Sakwa summarises the class composition in a diachronic perspective as follows:<sup>119</sup>

(in %)	1913	1928	1939	1959	1970	1979	1985
<b>Workers and employees</b>	17.0	17.6	50.2	68.3	79.5	85.1	87.9
<b>Manual workers</b>	14.6	12.4	33.7	50.2	57.4	60.0	61.7

<sup>117</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 53-57.

<sup>118</sup> Shlapentokh (1988), p. 41.

<sup>119</sup> Sakwa (1998), p. 39.

<b>Employees</b>	2.4	5.2	16.5	18.1	22.1	25.1	26.2
<b>Collective farmers</b>	0.0	2.9	47.2	31.4	20.5	14.9	12.1
<b>Individual peasants</b>	66.7	74.9	2.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Property owners</b>	16.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

The figures show the basic features, first of all, the central role of manual workers in the Stalinist model. Even in the mid-1980s when the capitalist economies were experiencing the transition to postindustrial society, more than 60 per cent of the Soviet population were engaged in manual labour. Together with other employees, this social group, living predominantly in cities, outnumbered farmers and peasants by the late 1930s and, on the eve of the Gorbachevian reforms, the collective farmers accounted for only 12.1 per cent. Urbanisation process continued. Whereas the figure amounted to 17 per cent in 1926 and 34 per cent in 1939, in the early 1960s, the urban population became more numerous than the rural one. By 1985, urbanisation reached 65 per cent in total and 70 per cent in the RSFSR.<sup>120</sup>

The situation was in sharp contrast to that in China. Pei makes a comparison of urbanisation, labour force in the nonagricultural sector and the levels of education in the socialist countries worldwide, from which follows that the socioeconomic structure of both countries was radically different by the beginning of comprehensive reforms. In China, urbanisation amounted to a mere 18.9 per cent in 1979, and the nonagricultural sector employed less than a quarter of the population, while only 21.8 per cent of the Chinese had secondary education by 1982. The figure for higher education equaled 1.0 per cent, contrary to 63.3 and 13.9 per cent respectively in the Soviet Union by 1989. General level of education was, nevertheless, relatively high in both countries.<sup>121</sup> China had a level corresponding with a middle-income country, while the USSR—with an advanced capitalist world.<sup>122</sup> The most problematic were China's rural areas where up to 21 per cent of the population remained illiterate by the mid-1980s.<sup>123</sup>

The Soviet state carried out a highly egalitarian salary policy. Interestingly, the rise in salaries for less qualified workers was higher and the minimum wage was converging to the average wage, reaching 42 per cent in the early 1980s. The egalitarian policy, however, caused a decrease in motivation to excellence and qualification, which was strengthened by the general orientation to

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<sup>120</sup> Lewin (1988), p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> Pei (1994), p. 59.

<sup>122</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 116.

<sup>123</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 145.

manual workers.<sup>124</sup> By 1985, the average monthly salary of an industrial worker was by 37 per cent higher than that of medical personnel and by 28 per cent higher compared to teachers. While miners or oil workers earned 318 rubles, an associate professor received between 200 and 250 rubles, which was similar to the average wage of a worker in industry.<sup>125</sup> State salary egalitarianism was accompanied by economic differentiation resulting from the expansion of shadow economy, elite privileges and corruption. This discrepancy contributed to the growing public dissatisfaction and a sense of injustice all the more that the Soviet citizens were generally critical of social inequalities, which differentiated them from the Chinese.

It also applies to the attitude towards private ownership persisting until the end of the Soviet regime. Pei cites a sociological research conducted amidst the radical transformation in 1990, according to which up to 42 per cent of people opposed the existence of private enterprises and 37 per cent disapproved foreign-owned companies whereas the positive stance was adopted by 31 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. In contrast, the most positive assessment was vocalised in the case of companies owned or leased by collectives (72 per cent) and joint enterprises (71 per cent). At the same time, half of the population remained to be against the use of hired labour.<sup>126</sup> The strong scepticism towards private property in the late phase of perestroika corresponds with the aversion to stronger financial differentiation and social inequalities. The long-term official egalitarianism was undermined by informal practices related to the Brezhnevite oligarchisation, which quite often gained an illegal and criminal dimension. The personal connections played an enormous role to the detriment of formal rules. Ligachev notes that informal ties were crucial even for the members of the ruling party. For example, the amount of pension for party officials depended on the decision of the Politburo, so those who had not sufficient connections had to be satisfied with much worse conditions.<sup>127</sup> It is, therefore, not a coincidence that the post-Brezhnev leadership addressed the question of social justice, anti-corruption campaigns and strengthening of discipline.<sup>128</sup>

Despite the certain degeneration of the system, the public support was high throughout the Soviet period. It corroborates the efficiency of socialisation processes and the satisfaction of a great deal of needs of the citizens. The sociologist-émigré Shlapentokh, whom one can hardly suspect of liking to the Soviet regime, argues that the fundamentals of the socialist system and its

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<sup>124</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 391-392.

<sup>125</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), pp. 66-67.

<sup>126</sup> Pei (1994), pp. 138-139.

<sup>127</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 24-25.

<sup>128</sup> Shlapentokh (1988), pp. 78-79.

normativity such as public ownership, central planning, leading role of the Communist Party, superiority of Soviet culture and morals as well as the significance of Soviet patriotism were shared by a vast majority of citizens. People's support for the Soviet system was, moreover, much higher in the 1980s than in the first decade of the existence of the USSR.<sup>129</sup> Author's sociological research indicates that an overwhelming majority of people were satisfied with their career and salaries (50–80 per cent) as well as leisure time (up to 80 per cent). At the same time, no less than one-third adopted the opposite position. However, it applied mostly to the least educated and least active segment of society, so the potential risks were limited.<sup>130</sup>

Irrespective of the persisting emphasis on heavy industry and defence, the post-Stalin leadership was aware of the need for the acceleration of the development of service sector and consumption. Indeed, the rate of consumption growth amounted to 5.2 per cent per year between 1964 and 1973, and included the expansion of motoring, housing capacity as well as health care.<sup>131</sup> The Soviet Union was among the first thirty most developed countries in terms of urbanisation, housing, education, health system, food quality and life expectancy.<sup>132</sup> The public opinion polls conducted during perestroika show that the population pointed to alcoholism, corruption, thievery and speculation as the principal problems of the Soviet society, which corroborates that the very question of the existence and legitimacy of the Communist regime was not relevant whatsoever.<sup>133</sup> People became increasingly pessimistic as far as their material prospects and well-being were concerned in the late Brezhnev era but this mood did not spill over to the social and political instability.<sup>134</sup> The concurrent rise in expectations and frustration was, nevertheless, quite widespread, especially among skilled workers and white-collar personnel including the intelligentsia. Both Hough and Daniels, therefore, came to the conclusion that it was this milieu which became the engine of the radical transformation at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>135</sup> Yet the social demand for perestroika was limited and the changes originated in the elites.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), pp. 61-62.

<sup>130</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), pp. 34-36.

<sup>131</sup> Hanson (2014), pp. 115-117; Khanin (2008), p. 488.

<sup>132</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 491.

<sup>133</sup> Aron (2012), p. 193.

<sup>134</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), p. 12; Hanson (2014), p. 128.

<sup>135</sup> Hough (1997), p. 24; Daniels (1993), pp. 68-69.

<sup>136</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998).

The situation in China was diametrically opposite. Lynch argues that the level of China's development at the onset of reforms was comparable to the early 1920s when the NEP was introduced.<sup>137</sup> China was a predominantly a rural country with a small working class and even smaller bureaucracy and intelligentsia and an underdeveloped welfare state.<sup>138</sup> According to Pei, only 22 per cent of the labour force enjoyed the benefits of welfare state such as income security, stable employment, pensions and free health care while peasantry was excluded entirely.<sup>139</sup> Fairbank and Goldman state that skilled workers employed in large SOEs were the only group participating in the Chinese welfare state, which corresponds to 27 million employees of some 85,000 SOEs, producing three quarters of all industrial output.<sup>140</sup> The Chinese suffered from what was unknown in the USSR, that is, unemployment. The urban unemployment reached 5.9 per cent in 1979, of whom 57 per cent were young people.<sup>141</sup> The overall underdevelopment, poor material conditions, and low living standards created favourable conditions for comprehensive reforms which were encouraged by spontaneous public demand and initiatives, especially in the rural areas. The Chinese reform leaders could use the desire for improvement of both the system and individual life through moderate adjustments after the turnabouts and volatility of the Maoist Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, which shook the society as well as party-state bureaucracy.<sup>142</sup> The broad demand for restructuring was combined with that for stabilisation, both contrasting with the Soviet society saturated by social stability, security and benefits.<sup>143</sup> While Deng could capitalise on recent failures and negative example of leaps and radicalism, the Soviet reformers had to revise the Stalinist model which was both generally acceptable and accepted.<sup>144</sup>

Another factor to play its role were different demographic characteristics. The Chinese population was much more homogeneous, for the Han Chinese dominated throughout the vast country except for Tibet and Xinjiang where their share constituted less than 50 per cent of the inhabitants.<sup>145</sup> The ethnic, cultural but also administrative composition was incommensurably more complex in the USSR with its concept of federalism inclusive of 15 union republics, a high

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<sup>137</sup> Lynch (2012).

<sup>138</sup> Hongyi (2005), p. 2.

<sup>139</sup> Pei (1994), p. 100.

<sup>140</sup> Fairbank & Goldman (2001), p. 375.

<sup>141</sup> Pei (1994), p. 97.

<sup>142</sup> Tucker (1995-1996), p. 509.

<sup>143</sup> Strayer (2001), p. 395.

<sup>144</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 171.

<sup>145</sup> Hongyi (2005), p. 7.

number of autonomous republics, regions and districts.<sup>146</sup> These demographic factors of the Asian country improved the starting position of the political leadership just as did the fact that some of the Chinese reformers in head of Deng Xiaoping belonged to the founders of the PRC which provided them with much higher legitimacy.<sup>147</sup>

### 3.4 Economic development

The development in the Soviet Union was undergoing different phases. It was typical of the absence of economic cycles inherent to capitalist economies. Given the planned character of the Soviet economy, the dynamics of the latter could be characterised in terms of the alternation of centralisation and decentralisation. All in all, the Stalinist model proved the efficiency and resilience during the stage of industrialisation and the construction of a solid economic basis needed for preserving the Soviet state in an unfavourable external environment. The model enabled ambitious external policies, expansion of influence around the world, and achievement of strategic parity with the United States.<sup>148</sup> The economic growth was solid at least until the mid-1970s with absolute declines in GDP (in 1990 \$) occurring only in 1959, 1963 and 1979 prior to the perestroika period.<sup>149</sup> The sustainable performance is confirmed by many authors despite the differences in their methodology and value orientation.<sup>150</sup>

#### 3.4.1 *General characteristics*

Khanin differentiates three periods in the economic dynamics between the Kosygin reform and the Gorbachevian perestroika: solid development in 1966–1975, rapid deterioration in 1976–1985, and soft improvement in 1986–1987. The post-1966 growth was considerable and comparable with developed countries.<sup>151</sup> It included the development of energy, engineering and metallurgy industries, which made the country one of the world leaders in the production of minerals, particularly oil and gas.<sup>152</sup> Economists and sociologists largely agree that the economic performance started to deteriorate by mid-1970s, which coincided with the turn in sentiments and decline in optimism regarding the material prospects in society itself. Aron points to a paradoxical phenomenon when the substantial rise in income per capita, which doubled between

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<sup>146</sup> Sakwa (1998), p. 240.

<sup>147</sup> Strayer (2001), p. 399.

<sup>148</sup> Aron (2012), pp. 14-15.

<sup>149</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 5.

<sup>150</sup> Aron (2012); Khanin (2008); Shlapentokh (1988).

<sup>151</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 396.

<sup>152</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 505-506.

1965 and 1980, was accompanied by rising public dissatisfaction.<sup>153</sup> The Soviet experience seemingly corroborates the relevance of the so-called Tocquevillian paradox which draws a connection between material well-being and social discontent.

The impending stagnation could have been hardly overlooked even though some high-level Soviet officials—including the long-term Chairman of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) Nikolai Baibakov who managed to identify negative features and supported Gorbachev's acceleration—refuse to interpret the economic development in terms of stagnation.<sup>154</sup> The Stalinist model eventually failed to reach superiority over capitalism and surpass the United States economically. On the contrary, it was surpassed by Japan as the second largest economy. The Soviet share in the world economy was decreasing. The convergence with the U.S. in terms of GDP per capita halted in the 1970s. While the Soviet GDP per capita amounted to 20.8 per cent of the U.S. in 1946, it converged to 35.2 per cent by 1960. Since then, the figure started slightly declining to 33.5 per cent in 1985 and subsequently dropped to 27.1 per cent in 1991 as a result of the unsuccessful reforms. A similar tendency appeared in the countries of the Soviet bloc except for Bulgaria and Hungary.<sup>155</sup> Even though GDP per capita almost stagnated in the 1980s, it was not falling in absolute terms.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the rise of labour productivity and investment began to lower and the overall growth was driven especially by the increasing inputs, that is, state investment.<sup>157</sup> As for the labour productivity (measured as GDP per hour worked), the indicator was converging with the U.S. in 1950–1973 while diverging in the following period. It contrasts with China where the development was opposite.<sup>158</sup>

The factors causing the decline in growth and stagnation were multiple. The central authority was weakening as the efficiency of political levers and the will to exercise the powers were. This was accompanied by the loss of plan discipline and socialist morale. The ability of the introduction of innovation and new technologies deteriorated paired with the declining resource allocation to higher-productivity sectors as a consequence of the slowing transfer of labour force from agriculture to industry. The latter was connected with the increasing exhaustion of the demographic potential.<sup>159</sup> Growing depletion of natural resources in the European part of the

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<sup>153</sup> Aron (2012), p. 27.

<sup>154</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 14.

<sup>155</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 243-245.

<sup>156</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 247.

<sup>157</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 397-398.

<sup>158</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 246.

<sup>159</sup> Hanson (2014), pp. 250-251.

country required the relocation to Siberia, which led to rising extracting, infrastructure as well as transport costs.<sup>160</sup> The existing capacities were less and less capable of covering the demand and needs of both the state and society. In the late 1970s, farm output virtually ceased to grow, which related to the resource depletion, unfavourable climate and environment conditions, and last but not least, the reallocation of financial subventions in favour of other sectors.<sup>161</sup>

One of the most privileged sectors was defence and military as the pillar of the Soviet state and its superpower position. The real expenditures were, moreover, classified. Official data did not reflect the actual state of affairs, the State Planning Committee as the central planning body did not include the military expenditures into the long-term projections and the existence of the CPSU Defence Council, which was authorised to control the security sector, was admitted only in 1976.<sup>162</sup> The volume of defence expenditure has, therefore, always been an object of controversies. In 1990, experts of the Committee on Science of the Supreme Soviet estimated the expenditure at approximately 23 per cent of GNP, while other estimates reached up to a third of GNP and Shlapentokh did not exclude that the share of military expenditures could account for 30–40 per cent of GNP in the last decades of the Soviet era.<sup>163</sup>

Aron adds additional figures to show the scope of the military burden: 75 per cent of the science funding went to military research, every fourth Muscovite worked in the defence-related field, and 75 per cent of factories in Leningrad were part of the defence industry. In 1989, there were 4,258,000 men under arms, which is more than in the U.S., China and West Germany together, with 16 soldiers per 1,000 people, while the figure amounted to 10 in the U.S. or France and four in China. To put one more example, the Warsaw Pact had nearly twice as many tanks as NATO, while the USSR itself had almost as many armoured fighting vehicles as the entire North Atlantic Alliance.<sup>164</sup> These figures are to demonstrate the hypertrophy of the Soviet military sector, which posed an enormous financial burden and, at the same time, made the military-industrial complex one of the most influential actors within the system. It complicated the revisions in the field in contrast to the situation in China where the political leadership maintained firmer control over the military. It enabled Deng Xiaoping to cut the defence expenditures at the onset of reforms. The

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<sup>160</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), p. 111.

<sup>161</sup> Hanson (2014), pp. 132-139.

<sup>162</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), p. 15; Sakwa (1998), p. 121.

<sup>163</sup> Aron (2012), p. 289; Sakwa (1998), p. 121; Shlapentokh (2001), p. 25.

<sup>164</sup> Aron (2012), pp. 289-290.

Chinese armed forces consumed 10 per cent of investment in the late 1970s, while the figure dropped to less than 6 per cent by 1986.<sup>165</sup>

The decelerating economy and the rising need of capital investment as well as consumption led to the increase in indebtedness. The state debt was only minimal in the early 1970s, but it increased 13 times between 1971 and 1985. Whereas the figure equaled 2.8 per cent of national income, it rose to 8.0 per cent in 1975, 15.3 per cent in 1980 and reached 18.5 per cent when Gorbachev assumed the highest position.<sup>166</sup> This tendency spilled over to the balance of external debt which increased fourfold in 1980–1987. The negative development was interconnected with international obligations and generous assistance to the allies and foreign partners. Both the stability and reputation of the Soviet bloc was put into question after Poland's bankruptcy in 1981 and the rapid expansion of indebtedness of individual countries of the CMEA.<sup>167</sup> Finally, the overall financial balance of the USSR was strongly affected by the world prices of oil and gas. The situation in the world market played into Moscow's hands throughout the 1970s and the first half of the following decade. The Soviets discovered five dozen new oil fields in the 1960s, which enabled the country to become a net exporter of the commodity. Global prices of oil soared tenfold in the 1970s.<sup>168</sup> From 1973 to 1985, energy exports constituted up to 80 per cent of the Soviet hard currency earnings.<sup>169</sup> These incomes made external expansion possible, entailing, however, one serious side effect. The earnings contributed to the preservation of the economic status quo with all its deficiencies, inefficiencies, and growing risks.<sup>170</sup> As a result, the high price of oil postponed reforms of the Stalinist model.<sup>171</sup> The subsequent drop in world prices of oil, which happened in 1985–1986, caused only graver damages even more so that the 69-per cent slump was preceded and accompanied by the pressure from the U.S. administration. The latter succeeded in postponing the launch of gas pipelines from Siberia to Europe by two years and decreasing the dollar exchange rate, which depreciated the value of Soviet hard currency income by 75 per cent.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Miller (2016), p. 179.

<sup>166</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 469.

<sup>167</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 475-476.

<sup>168</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 154.

<sup>169</sup> Kotkin (2001), p. 15.

<sup>170</sup> Medvedev (1994), p. 7.

<sup>171</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 314.

<sup>172</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 469-470.

In the 1980s, the economy suffered from a wide array of problems including backward agriculture, structural imbalance of exports based on raw materials, strong dependence on the import of grain, consumer goods and technology from capitalist countries, low quality of both labour and production and waste of resources.<sup>173</sup> Khanin argues that perhaps the most serious failure was the disintegration of fiscal and monetary policies, which was related to the actual loss-making of a great deal of enterprises and the need for massive subventions. The excessive orientation to the military and heavy industry hindered a more effective reallocation of resources and structural revision of the expenditures in favour of the consumption side, which made the Soviet state purchase these articles abroad, thus deepening the trade deficit. The relatively rapid pace of the rise in wages did not correspond to labour productivity and blocked the financial means which could be used for innovation, modernisation, education and hence to the increase in labour productivity. The insufficient supply in conjunction with the rising savings stimulated the expansion of the shadow economy, which caused further damage to the Soviet economy and state budget.<sup>174</sup>

Despite these negative tendencies was there no crisis which would call for immediate radical reforms in order to avoid an economic collapse.<sup>175</sup> The economic development remained sustainable.<sup>176</sup> “To argue that the Soviet economic system came to an end because comprehensive state ownership and central planning were inherently unworkable is difficult. Soviet central planning worked after a fashion for sixty years, from 1928 to 1988. It coped with all-out war and it left Soviet citizens somewhat better off in the late 1980s than they had been in the late 1920s. Those who argued in the 1920s and 1930s that socialist production was not possible were wrong,” concludes Hanson.<sup>177</sup>

### 3.4.2 *Industry*

Rapid industrialisation and the construction of a solid industrial basis was one of the principal achievements of the Stalinist model. The reverse side of this achievement was one-sided economic structure, certain over-industrialisation to the detriment of the development of other sectors, first of all, agriculture and services, and finally excessive centralisation, which undermined autonomous action and planning, innovation and efficiency eventually. Some

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<sup>173</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), pp. 90-91.

<sup>174</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 509.

<sup>175</sup> Alekseev (2020), pp. 45-46; Aron (2012), p. 13; Åslund (1989), p. 189; Miller (2016), p. 60.

<sup>176</sup> Brown (2007), p. 5.

<sup>177</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 241.

aspects of the Stalinist model were implemented in China after the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949, but both the Soviets and the Chinese were more or less aware that China was too different country to fully adopt the Stalinist pattern by that moment.

Both countries had the advantage of the existence of a big economy that could be developed based on internal capabilities and resources while being protected against external competition by means of protectionist barriers.<sup>178</sup> Even though Mao Zedong soon came to the conclusion that the excessive adherence to the Stalinist model produced too many side effects and imbalances, Nolan argues that China could be considered more “over-industrialised” than the USSR. The table below shows the economic structure of prereform China, Soviet Union, low-income economies (except for China and India; LIEs), middle-income economies (MIEs), and high-income economies (HIEs) according to the methodology of the World Bank. The data demonstrate that China’s industrial sector was robust and larger than the LIEs, MIEs and HIEs by 1980.<sup>179</sup> Even though the figure for the USSR is higher in absolute terms, one should bear in mind that the country was ahead of China from the point of view of economic development.

(in %)	GDP					Employment				
	USSR	PRC	LIEs	MIEs	HIEs	USSR	PRC	LIEs	MIEs	HIEs
<b>Agriculture</b>	16	31	45	15	4	14	71	73	44	6
<b>Industry</b>	62	47	17	40	37	45	17	11	22	38
<b>Services</b>	22	22	38	45	62	41	12	19	34	56

The Stalinist model entailed centralisation in both planning and management as well as the establishment of large enterprises to the detriment of small- and medium-sized ones. The orientation to large units was interconnected with the logic of central planning and Lenin’s normative idea of socialism as a single giant industrial enterprise.<sup>180</sup> Comparison of enterprises in terms of their number, employees, fixed assets and gross value of industrial output, nevertheless, shows the differences between the Soviet Union and China. The latter had a higher proportion of smaller enterprises, which was combined with the stronger pressure on self-reliance and autonomy. In this regard, Mao differed from Stalin substantially. The Chinese could have benefited from a relatively high technical capacity in the countryside as well as the interest of local governments in the promotion and development of local industries as such.<sup>181</sup> The

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<sup>178</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 115.  
<sup>179</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 124.  
<sup>180</sup> Sutela (1991), p. 7.  
<sup>181</sup> Nolan (1995), pp. 132-134.

following table summarises the basic features of enterprises in both countries (the data apply to the USSR in 1983 and China in 1987):<sup>182</sup>

(in %)	Total number of enterprises		Employees		Fixed assets		Gross industrial output	
	USSR	PRC	USSR	PRC	USSR	PRC	USSR	PRC
<b>Number of employees</b>								
<100	27.2	68.5	1.6	14.0	1.1	5.8	1.9	9.6
100–500	42.4	25.6	12.6	32.6	8.8	18.1	12.8	26.6
500–1,000	13.1	3.6	11.2	14.7	9.0	12.2	10.8	15.5
1,000–10,000	16.3	2.2	52.4	27.5	51.8	38.2	54.1	36.5
>10,000	1.0	0.1	22.2	11.2	29.3	25.7	54.1	36.5

Centralisation in the Soviet Union was much tighter compared to China. Despite their responsibilities for managing local transport, shops, welfare, cultural, and health services as well as some enterprises and supplies, the powers and autonomy of the local soviets were strictly limited. The local authorities were not allowed to raise taxes and administer the financial issues independently. Their main source of income was the sales tax, but the revenues were distributed only centrally.<sup>183</sup> As a result, actors at the lower levels had few resources and even fewer experience, skills, and motivation to be active. It is in sharp contrast to China where the local governments played a crucial role in the promotion of economic reform, becoming an engine of rapid economic growth thanks to the boom of township and village enterprises (TVEs).<sup>184</sup> Decentralisation tendencies alternated with centralisation periods in both countries but the prereform Soviet Union never experienced any substantial decentralisation comparable to Mao's policies during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. It can be demonstrated by the number of enterprises under direct central control and the number of items which were distributed by central bodies in prereform China:<sup>185</sup>

	1953	1957	1958	1963	1971–1973
<b>Enterprises</b>	2,800	9,300	1,200	10,000	2,000
<b>Items</b>	227	532	132	500	217

<sup>182</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 128.

<sup>183</sup> Sakwa (1998), p. 133.

<sup>184</sup> Strayer (2001), p. 394.

<sup>185</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 47.

Local governments were authorised to establish small-scale rural industries which were not subjected to central planning and were not financed by the state either.<sup>186</sup> Unlike the Soviets in the USSR, local governments in China were motivated to support reforms because they could collect and control most of the tax revenues. At the same time, the subsidies from Beijing were decreasing. At the outset of reforms, the local agents could build upon both the not-so-distant experience of private farms and enterprises, which produced up to two-thirds of the country's total output in the first years after the establishment of the People's Republic and the development of local industries under Mao.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, the decentralisation process inclusive of the increasing autonomy of regional and local actors was mostly systematic, gradual and accompanied by the preservation of the centralised structure of the CPC, which had stabilising effects.<sup>188</sup> It contrasts to the Soviet-style decentralisation which led to fragmentation, atomisation and seizure of assets by local actors especially due to the substantial shattering of the CPSU and central power.<sup>189</sup> Fairbank highlights the importance of the experience and institutions of the local actors for the economic reforms in China, observing that the TVEs were the most dynamic sector whose annual growth amounted to 20–30 per cent in the 1980s. "Collectives began with repair shops, transport, agricultural tools and small light industry but gradually expanded into larger factories, producing consumer goods for international as well as for domestic markets".<sup>190</sup> The dynamics of industrial development changed in the reform period, for the gross value of output light industry grew by 14 per cent per annum and high industry by 10 per cent per annum in 1979–1990 whereas the figures were 9 and 14 per cent respectively between 1952 and 1978.<sup>191</sup>

The analysis was to show both common and different features of the industrial sector in the Soviet Union and China and indicate in which regard was Beijing's starting point more advantageous in terms of the introduction of market mechanisms. The Chinese could benefit not only from the Maoist decentralisation policies but also from much more ancient and developed prerevolutionary patterns of markets, urbanisation and foreign trade, even though the capitalist forms were alienated and largely dependent on foreign actors combined with the absence of domestic bourgeoisie as well as stable state power. At the same time, entrepreneurship, market

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<sup>186</sup> Fairbank & Goldman (2001), p. 399.

<sup>187</sup> Hua (2006), p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Nolan (1995), pp. 177-178.

<sup>189</sup> Hongyi (2005), p. 2.

<sup>190</sup> Fairbank & Goldman (2001), p. 412.

<sup>191</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 217.

and capitalist elements were not fully strange to the Soviet or Russian civilisational trajectory either. Capitalism was rapidly expanding in prerevolutionary Russia, nonetheless, this heritage was too remote in the 1980s and could hardly be perceived as positive. But the Stalinist model itself contained both market institutions and autonomous activities beyond the state central plans, particularly, the rural production of household plots and shadow economy.<sup>192</sup> The Maoist model was, however, different from the Stalinist one. Reform policies, therefore, must have allowed for diverse stages of development and objective socioeconomic differences which had impacts on a wide array of economic issues. It applied to industry as well as agriculture.

### 3.4.3 *Agriculture*

In the previous subchapter, I show that agriculture employed 14 per cent of Soviet labour force compared to 71 per cent in China, while accounting for 16 per cent of Soviet GDP and 31 per cent of China's GDP by 1980. It follows that the role of this sector in China was objectively more important. The Stalinist model of agriculture was based on collectivisation and large basic units (akin to those in industry). The average size of Soviet farms was 3,485 hectares with less than 38 workers, while the size was smaller in China where it amounted to 26 hectares with 50–60 workers.<sup>193</sup> The vast area of Soviet farms corresponded, for instance, with cowsheds which contained 400 cows on average. Under such circumstances, could one single family hardly manage these units, for they were too large, and collective forms of farming and division of labour were thus needed.<sup>194</sup> Aside from the collectivised sector, there was the institution of private plots which were generally tolerated throughout the Soviet period. Productivity in the rural plots was much higher in comparison with the state and collective farms and the total volume of production was far from marginal. Shliapentokh mentions that the productivity was by 2 to 6 times higher and the plots produced up to 25 per cent of agricultural products on average.<sup>195</sup> Sakwa estimates that the plots provided approximately 60 per cent of potatoes, 30 per cent of vegetables and a large portion of meat, milk and eggs. It was so despite the fact that the plots covered a mere 4 per cent of the cultivated land.<sup>196</sup> One can add statistics from 1950 when the agricultural private sector was at its height. The rural plots then produced 89 per cent of eggs, 75 per cent of milk, 73 per cent of potatoes, 67 per cent of meat, 44 per cent of vegetables, and 21 per cent of wool.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Nolan (1995), pp. 120-122.

<sup>193</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 143.

<sup>194</sup> Åslund (1989), p. 189.

<sup>195</sup> Shliapentokh (1988), pp. 62, 114.

<sup>196</sup> Sakwa (1998), pp. 221-223.

<sup>197</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 149.

Even though the private sector played a much more important role in the USSR than in China, Soviet leaders before perestroika tolerated it at most and never recognised it a fully-fledged and legitimate part of socialist agriculture. The emphasis was put on the collectivised forms notwithstanding their declining efficiency. Between 1965 and 1981, the fixed capital investment in agriculture rose 4.7 times, while the total output only doubled, so the investment became less productive.<sup>198</sup> As Nolan puts it, the main problem of Soviet agriculture consisted in the need for a large amount of inputs to secure the production needed.<sup>199</sup> The Chinese agriculture was more intensive-oriented, which was determined by the rapidly growing population and a limited area of cultivable land. It made China a country with one of the lowest amount of farmland per person, in other words, a high labour input per unit. It combined with high irrigation ratio and a high proportion of land which was cropped more than once a year. Up to 45 per cent of land was irrigated in China by 1978, in contrast to only some 7 per cent in the USSR in the late 1970s.<sup>200</sup> Despite the modernisation of the sector, China's food production per capita remained unchanged between 1955 and 1977.<sup>201</sup>

As in industry, the situation in agriculture was very different in both countries prior to the comprehensive reforms. Unlike the Soviet Union, peasants played a crucial role in the Chinese reforms and the emergence of domestic private sector.<sup>202</sup> The overwhelming part of society was interested in family farming based on leasing and market mechanisms and welcomed the decollectivisation.<sup>203</sup> One of the main reasons was the absence of welfare state in rural areas and the concurrent inability to enter the principal channels of upward mobility, that is, state industry, education and civil service. It made the Chinese peasants more prone to risk-taking and open to private farming under market conditions.<sup>204</sup> The strong support for market institutions and reforms could also be related to the limited role of the CPC in the countryside. The Party was largely urban-based and the share of peasants in the membership was gradually decreasing from 66.8 per cent in 1957 to 45.5 per cent in 1981 and 39.5 per cent six years later. By 1982, a mere 2.24 per cent of the rural population were members of the CPC in contrast to 10.22 per cent of city dwellers. The sociological research reveals that in early 1979, half of the peasants in Anhui province, which was a pioneer of reform policies, supported decollectivisation and the

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<sup>198</sup> Miller (2016), p. 119.

<sup>199</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 143.

<sup>200</sup> Nolan (1995), pp. 139-141.

<sup>201</sup> Hua (2006), p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> Pei (1994), p. 99.

<sup>203</sup> Åslund (1989), p. 189.

<sup>204</sup> Pei (1994), pp. 102-103.

introduction of the household responsibility system, while only 20 per cent opposed them. A year later, up to 90 per cent of local peasants already were in favour of complete decollectivisation.<sup>205</sup>

The picture in the USSR was opposite. The powerful agro-industrial complex as well as the mass of collective farmers considered any idea of dissolution of the collective agriculture regressive.<sup>206</sup> Political opposition from a coalition of rural party officials, kolkhoz and sovkhoz managers as well as their administrative personnel aroused from the vested interest in the old system.<sup>207</sup> Passivity and the lack of demand from the bottom can be illustrated by the data from the RSFSR showing that five years after the launch of reform under Gorbachev's leadership there were 20,144 private firms which accounted for less than 0.5 per cent of agricultural land.<sup>208</sup> Similarly, only some 10 per cent of the Soviet sovkhoz workers considered the possibility of private farming.<sup>209</sup> Zubok sums it up in the following way: "While Deng Xiaoping could release the productive energy of hundreds of millions of poor peasants by authorising a state-regulated agricultural market, Gorbachev had the remains of peasantry, no more than 20% of the Soviet workforce, reshaped into collective farmers, included in the welfare state and heavily subsidised from the state budget."<sup>210</sup> It is far from surprising that the Soviet society which enjoyed social benefits, security and stability and had a manifoldly higher income per capita was much more averse to reform policies than the Chinese one.<sup>211</sup>

#### 3.4.4 *External economic relations*

The position of the Soviet Union and China in international political as well as economic relations was very different and it was undergoing rapid changes over time. China isolated herself from the outside world during the Cultural Revolution, which made her a pariah even among the socialist countries. China's weakness had both political and economic reasons. Her stagnation contrasted with the dynamics of capitalist Asian economies.<sup>212</sup> In 1973, the country's GDP per capita was roughly \$800 in comparison with \$4,000 in Taiwan, \$6,000 in Singapore, \$7,000 in Hong Kong and \$11,500 in Japan. These figures lead Westad to conclude that the Central Kingdom occupied a peripheral rather than a central position in Asia.<sup>213</sup> *Au contraire*, Moscow

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<sup>205</sup> Pei (1994), pp. 101, 128.

<sup>206</sup> Tucker (1995–1996), p. 511.

<sup>207</sup> Strayer (2001), p. 398.

<sup>208</sup> Pei (1994), p. 128.

<sup>209</sup> Strayer (2001), p. 398.

<sup>210</sup> Zubok (2017), p. 131.

<sup>211</sup> Tooze (2021).

<sup>212</sup> Vogel (1991).

<sup>213</sup> Westad (2015), p. 405.

became engaged in bilateral talks with Washington, especially in the field of security and disarmament and intensified relations with capitalist countries in Europe. Brezhnev decided to invest his political capital into détente and this process was not undermined by the intervention in Czechoslovakia either. Détente, Ostpolitik and the Helsinki process, culminating in the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords in 1975, reaffirmed the Soviet position in Europe and laid foundations for the emergence of Soviet-European interdependence.

The latter has a predominantly an economic dimension. The USSR was gradually integrating itself in the world economy even though Moscow did not consider the way which was later chosen by the Chinese, that is, the accession to Western economic institutions such as World Bank, IMF or GATT. A negative attitude towards the West-dominated international organisations dated to the time of the World War II when Moscow refused to participate in their establishment and subsequently opposed any engagement in the U.S. initiatives such as the European Recovery Programme. These were seen as incompatible with the interests of the International Communist Movement and world socialism given the allegedly antagonistic nature of the relations between the socialist and capitalist camps. Stalin’s death, nevertheless, opened the door for rethinking the relations and mitigating confrontation between the USSR and the capitalist countries. It is, therefore, not surprising that the economic interactions with the outside world were deepening as shown by the table below:<sup>214</sup>

	<b>1965</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>
<b>Foreign trade in billion rubles</b>	14.6	22.1	50.7	94.1	141.6
<b>Index of foreign trade (1960=100)</b>	141	209	304	394	472

At the same time, foreign trade strongly concentrated on the CMEA countries. By 1986, up to 66.8 per cent of foreign trade was made up by socialist countries, while only 19.2 per cent by developed countries and 14 per cent by the developing ones. The trade with capitalist countries suffered from structural disbalances, for the overwhelming majority of Soviet goods was uncompetitive under market conditions, and the Soviet side thus could provide its partners mostly with raw materials. Moreover, an increasing volume of the Soviet import was formed by grain to cover the needs of the domestic population, which exhausted the foreign exchange reserves. The consumption-oriented import thus did not generate any added value. After the slump in world prices of oil, it turned out that such one-sided structure of foreign trade was

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<sup>214</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 477.

financially unsustainable from a long-term perspective.<sup>215</sup> Despite the expanding external economic relations, the Soviet share in global exports stagnated. Khanin asserts that the proportion was similar to that of the Russian Empire in 1913 when the figure amounted to 4.5 per cent:<sup>216</sup>

	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1986
<b>Global exports in \$ billion</b>	185.6	315.1	871.2	2,001.0	1,930.0	2,118.0
<b>USSR's exports in \$ billion</b>	8.2	12.8	32.0	76.4	86.7	96.3
<b>USSR's share in global exports in %</b>	4.4	4.0	3.7	3.8	4.5	4.6

In connection with the development of relations between the Soviet Union and the Western Europe, the economic interactions were deepening. Infrastructure projects were launched to secure the supplies of Soviet gas and oil to Europe. These were, however, increasingly perceived as a threat by Washington. The Reagan administration opposed the allies' growing interdependence with Moscow combined with the expansion of Soviet hard currency reserves and was determined to thwart the Soviet-European relations face to face to the invasion of Afghanistan and the introduction of martial law in Poland. Discontent among both European allies and domestic farmers, who were seriously damaged by Reagan's hardline policies including the embargo on grain exports to the USSR, resulted in lifting the unpopular embargo and a compromise with the Europeans. Washington consented to the construction of pipeline infrastructure in a limited form.<sup>217</sup> Nonetheless, the sanctions against Moscow, whose scope widened considerably after 1979, remained in force.

The Soviet Union was the main target of the U.S. economic sanctions in the early 1980s, which hindered Moscow from gaining Western technology and external financing. The export to socialist countries was supervised and restricted through the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom), established in 1949. These measures were not lifted during perestroika either as the so-called Toshiba-Kongsberg scandal illustrated in 1987.<sup>218</sup> It shows that the Americans remained very cautious about relations with Moscow, being prepared to contain the stagnating superpower in different fields inclusive of the economic one. Paradoxically, the CoCom obstructed the Soviet transition to the market while the latter was verbally supported by

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<sup>215</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 481.

<sup>216</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 478.

<sup>217</sup> Brown (2020), pp. 107-109.

<sup>218</sup> Zubok (2017), p. 132.

the Western countries.<sup>219</sup> The Soviet Union was never granted the most favoured nation status, partially as a result of anti-Soviet activities on the part of the émigrés. While the Soviet diaspora mostly conducted activities aimed against the interests of their native country, torpedoing any cooperative and constructive efforts regarding the Soviet-Western relations, the overseas Chinese were willing to cooperate with the PRC. Beijing thus could engage the Chinese diaspora abroad in domestic economic development and use both their financial, human and social capital. Not by coincidence, about two-thirds of FDI between 1978 and 1995 came from or went through Hong Kong.<sup>220</sup>

This sharply contrasts with the treatment given to China. Amidst the Cultural Revolution and Cold War, leaders in both Beijing and Washington decided to break the ideological antagonisms and seek a path to normal relations. The bilateral cooperation aimed against Moscow brought many fruits to the PRC, for the pragmatic American support enabled China to integrate herself into the international community as a fully-fledged member of the UN Security Council and gain benefits from the economic relations with the Western superpower. The normalisation of diplomatic relations between both countries in 1979 was accompanied by granting the most favoured nation status to the Asian country by the U.S. The interrelationship became of so comprehensive character that some scholars started to mark it with a neologism “Chimerica” or “Chinamerica”.<sup>221</sup> In the 1980s, over 20,000 international partnerships worth more than \$26 billion were concluded by China.<sup>222</sup> The country’s exports soared from \$9.7 billion to \$52.5 billion between 1978 and 1989.<sup>223</sup> The leading destination of exports was the U.S. whose role was crucial for the Chinese development and prosperity. Roughly 20 per cent of exports went to the U.S. in 1990. Such an intensive exchange was facilitated by the growing concerns about Japan’s rise among the Americans, which led to the perception of China as a counterweight against both the Soviet Union (geopolitically and militarily) and Japan (economically).<sup>224</sup>

Cooperation did not limit itself to the political and economic realms but extended to the military sphere. Exchanges of military personnel were going on and Beijing even allowed the U.S. intelligence services to monitor the Soviet nuclear facilities from the Chinese territory.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Pavlov (1995), p. 89.

<sup>220</sup> Lynch (2012); Tucker (1995–1996), p. 509.

<sup>221</sup> Ferguson & Schularik (2007); Hung (2022); Jones (2010).

<sup>222</sup> Westad (2015), p. 377.

<sup>223</sup> Tucker (1995–1996), p. 95.

<sup>224</sup> Vogel (1979); Westad (2015), pp. 377-379.

<sup>225</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 111.

Washington's interest in the partnership corroborates the development after the events at Tiananmen Square when President George Bush sent his national security adviser Brent Scowcroft on a secret mission to the Chinese capital to discuss the prospects of further cooperation. This trip was followed by similar visits paid by former Secretaries of State Alexander Haig and Henry Kissinger as well as former President Richard Nixon.<sup>226</sup> In the last decade of the century, the country became the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign direct investment and it did not lose the American support for the accession to the WTO either despite the preservation of the Communist regime.<sup>227</sup> The Sino-American ties since the early 1970s, however, cannot be explained without reference to the Soviet Union and competition between these three actors.

### 3.5 Global competition and Soviet external model

Establishing the first socialist state, its founders laid a global mission to its foundations. The victory of Communists in a country peripheral to the Western world should have been soon followed by revolutions in the most advanced countries, but it happened neither after 1917 nor 1945. The objective socioeconomic weaknesses of the Soviet state did not enable Lenin to expand the revolution beyond the borders of the Russian Empire (with the only exception of Mongolia) and, similarly, they did not allow Stalin to fulfil this global mission either. The social and economic underdevelopment made the USSR inferior to the capitalist world and virtually all Soviet leaders were aware of this position, which made them obsessed with the idea of catching up with and surpassing the West.<sup>228</sup>

Despite the cause of the world socialist revolution, many authors argue that the external behaviour and foreign policy of the Soviet Union was essentially defensive, which deepened in Brezhnev period.<sup>229</sup> It indicated that the Soviet elite acknowledged a long-term coexistence of socialism and capitalism-qua-imperialism.<sup>230</sup> Daniels opines that Moscow did not resort to the adventurist and risky actions in Europe except for the interventions in its satellites in Central Europe which were to preserve the status quo. The only deviations from this course basically occurred in Korea, Cuba and Afghanistan.<sup>231</sup> Such assertions coincide with Gromyko's argument that the principal goals of the Soviet foreign policy were the prevention of war in Europe,

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<sup>226</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 378.

<sup>227</sup> Westad (2015), pp. 382-385.

<sup>228</sup> Shlapentokh (2001), p. 18.

<sup>229</sup> Arnason (1995), p. 48; Daniels (1993), p. 156; Hanson (2014), p. 31.

<sup>230</sup> Arnason (1995), p. 48.

<sup>231</sup> Daniels (1993), p. 156.

development of cooperative relations with European countries, global recognition of the unchangeability of borders as a *conditio sine qua non* for security in the old continent and reaching the strategic military parity with the U.S. as a basis of international security and peaceful coexistence between both blocs.<sup>232</sup> In May 1965 Brezhnev wrote in his diary that he was not able to image a better principle of international relations and cooperation than peaceful coexistence, defining Soviet priorities as follows: peaceful coexistence, fight for peace, support for national emancipatory movements and strengthening of the socialist camp as well as of the unity of the International Communist Movement *in toto*.<sup>233</sup> Brutents and Kornienko agree that the main benefit of the postwar Soviet foreign and military policy was the prevention of a large-scale war. The postures of Khrushchev and Brezhnev were, nevertheless, shaped by suspiciousness towards the West emerging from their experience during the World War II.<sup>234</sup> Kriuchkov highlights that the idea of multilayered confrontation with the West constituted the basis of Soviet foreign policy despite the Soviet-American military agreements and *détente*.<sup>235</sup> According to Akhromeev, the excessive focus on security issues along with the permanent military alert contributed to the existence of a conservative mindset and undermined strategic thinking.<sup>236</sup> The lack of pragmatism emerging from the rigid official doctrine undermined the potential of sober analysis and prognosis and subsequent decision-making.<sup>237</sup>

In spite of the war triumphalism, Stalin realised the limitations of the Soviet power and capabilities and, therefore, did not stir up revolutionary movements in the developing countries and remained sceptical about the prospects of the Communist victory in China as well as the war for reunification of Korea for a long time.<sup>238</sup> “In population, economic resources, strategic location, military potential, in everything except the number of ground troops kept in uniform after the war, the American-led coalition that Stalin precipitated enjoyed overwhelming superiority,” concludes Daniel.<sup>239</sup> The dominance of the Americans is confirmed by Westad, according to whom their GDP could have been equal to that of Europe and the USSR combined by 1950. The Western superpower surpassed the European allies in economic performance, labour productivity, as well as living standards when the indicator of GDP per capita being almost twice

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<sup>232</sup> Gromyko (2015), pp. 7-9, 79, 300.

<sup>233</sup> Brezhnev (2016), pp. 83-86.

<sup>234</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), pp. 36, 62; Brutents (2005), p. 27.

<sup>235</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), p. 100.

<sup>236</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), p. 11.

<sup>237</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), pp. 101-102.

<sup>238</sup> Daniels (1993), p. 157.

<sup>239</sup> Daniels (1993), p. 149.

that of Western Europe. Furthermore, the U.S. became the global leader in export and foreign investment.<sup>240</sup> To put it in another way, the Cold War was not a clash of two equal superpowers, for “America just had more of everything: power, growth, ideas, modernity”.<sup>241</sup> Dobrynin explains that all Soviet leaders from Stalin to Chernenko perceived the U.S. as a real military threat, considering the possibility of a nuclear war to be real.<sup>242</sup>

The socioeconomic characteristics and geopolitical role of the U.S. corroborated Marx’s prediction that this country would be the main power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the aspiration to become a global leader. In contrast, the vision of the growing inner contradictions within imperialism, which would result in the final crisis of the capitalist system and revolutionary changes in the Western world as presented by Stalin and Zhdanov after the World War II did not come true. Instead, the Soviets witnessed an economic boom in the U.S., Europe, and Japan, which would be later followed by Asian Tigers. If capitalism could seem on the brink of collapse in the interwar period, the picture was very opposite by the 1960s.<sup>243</sup> Khrushchev’s impulsive policies and grandiose proclamations about the construction of a Communist society by 20 years which entered his speech at the 22<sup>nd</sup> CPSU Congress in 1961 and were included in the new party programme could not make a breakthrough. The next decade, nevertheless, brought about a decline in the capitalist West, which coincided with the heyday of the Soviet geopolitical power and raised Moscow’s hopes that the final crisis of capitalism was about to break out. The United States suffered from high unemployment and inflation, racial conflicts as well as political instability provoked by the defeat in Vietnam, the Watergate affair, and the 1968 protests. The economic crisis of the Western countries was deepened by the oil shocks.<sup>244</sup> While Washington withdrew from Vietnam quagmire, Moscow succeeded in achieving strategic parity with the U.S. and consolidating its European gains in Helsinki.<sup>245</sup> These factors gave the Soviets a false impression of the American decline and retreat and the inevitable rise of the socialist camp, which was combined by the massive incomes from the expanding export of raw materials.<sup>246</sup> However, while the Western countries used the crisis to modernisation and innovation based on

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<sup>240</sup> Westad (2013), p. 110.

<sup>241</sup> Westad (2013), p. 403.

<sup>242</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 522.

<sup>243</sup> Kotkin (2001), p. 20.

<sup>244</sup> Kotkin (2001), p. 14; Miller (2016), p. 22.

<sup>245</sup> In 1972 Brezhnev and Nixon concluded an agreement which based the bilateral relations on peaceful coexistence for the first time. The significance of the agreement is emphasised by many Soviet diplomats (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, p. 226).

<sup>246</sup> Kennedy (1987); Sakwa (1998), p. 70.

the flexibility and adaptability of capitalism, the Soviet leaders underestimated the structural problems of the Stalinist economic model and missed the suitable moment for reforms. It would give a comparative advantage to the capitalist countries in the upcoming decades.

Despite the frequent shortage of transparency and unbiased hard data about the actual socioeconomic situation, Khanin argues that the middle-level state and party apparatus as well as experts were aware of the swelling economic problems already in the 1970s.<sup>247</sup> Even some plena of the CPSU Central Committee became a platform of critical discussion about the economic performance with the participation of the representatives of the Gosplan. The leadership, however, lacked the will to cope with the complex issue seriously.<sup>248</sup> The scepticism towards reform had a handful of reasons which will be analysed later. The only point I would like to mention at this moment are the problems of the reformed socialist countries themselves (Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia). The CEE allies contended with rapidly expanding indebtedness and political upheaval as a consequence of people's frustration with a relatively low standard of living, which pushed the governments to import both technology and consumer goods from capitalist countries at high financial cost.<sup>249</sup> An excessive engagement in European affairs, global competition with the U.S., foreign adventures and finally the containment of China made a focus on both the Asia-Pacific region with its Tigers and internal development hardly possible even though not a few experts and political representatives were aware of the significance of the region and Eastern policy including Andropov and Gorbachev themselves.<sup>250</sup> Moscow had to cope with what is usually called an "imperial overstretch".<sup>251</sup> The China question played a prominent part in the overstretch.<sup>252</sup> "As a result of having to confront the West and China simultaneously, the Soviet Union overextended its strength, which contributed significantly to the final collapse of the Soviet empire in the late 1980s and early 1990s."<sup>253</sup>

Unlike the Chinese, the Soviet leaders were burdened with a number of external commitments both to their socialist allies and friendly actors in the Third World which made their position more difficult and their leeway narrower.<sup>254</sup> Grachev argues that the Soviet elites suffered from a "1941

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<sup>247</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 405-408.

<sup>248</sup> Cherniaev (1995), p. 385.

<sup>249</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 13-14.

<sup>250</sup> Miller (2016), p. 27; Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 106.

<sup>251</sup> Arnason (2000), p. 80; Sakwa (2013), p. 70.

<sup>252</sup> Arnason (1993), p. 195.

<sup>253</sup> Chen (2010), p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> Zubok (2017), p. 122.

syndrome” which pushed them to overemphasise security and military issues to the detriment of other sectors and motivated them to seek strategic equality between the USSR on one hand, and the U.S., NATO and later also the PRC on the other at any cost.<sup>255</sup> Zubok agrees with such an interpretation adding that security and power were the primary goals no later than since Stalin.<sup>256</sup> A turn was brought about only by a generation change and power takeover by younger leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Egor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov or Boris El'tsin who did not accept the demands and influence of the military-industrial complex as something taken for granted.<sup>257</sup> Shevardnadze explained the innovative thinking in a way that the new leaders understood that national security was not about military power only and that the strategic parity with the U.S. was somewhat one-sided, for the Soviet Union lagged behind the American side in a wide array of fields and the long-term overemphasis on the military might hindered the development of other sectors. From such a perspective, the arithmetical parity was unsustainable and the idea of quantitative superiority untenable.<sup>258</sup> By the same token, at the summit of defence ministers of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow in 1988, Gorbachev noted that military parity did not mean an arithmetical equality but the capability to cause fatal damage to the other side.<sup>259</sup> This attitude enabled to reduce the military without putting the national security in danger.

Traditionally, the USSR advanced the cause of *socialist internationalism* and the International Communist Movement (ICM) as the basis of the relations among the socialist countries in general and within the Soviet bloc in particular, which combined with a cooperation with allied actors beyond the socialist camp. Moscow tended to treat and manage the socialist bloc in a spirit of democratic centralism to guarantee the hegemonic role of the Soviets.<sup>260</sup> Gromyko perceived socialist internationalism as a new pattern of interstate relations typical of genuine equality, respect for sovereignty, mutual assistance and support.<sup>261</sup> However, in fact, socialist internationalism gave birth to what was usually called the Brezhnev Doctrine which treated any relevant issue appearing in CEE countries as a matter of common interest and any threat to the Communist regimes as a problem of Soviet national security. Brezhnev focused on the stability and legitimacy of the Communist regimes in the Soviet sphere of influence, which were to be strengthened through economic integration, political consolidation, ideological orthodoxy, and

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<sup>255</sup> Grachev (2008), p. 14.

<sup>256</sup> Zubok (2009), p. xxiv.

<sup>257</sup> Grachev (2008), p. 38.

<sup>258</sup> Shevardnadze (1991), pp. 54, 151.

<sup>259</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 346.

<sup>260</sup> Brutents (1998), p. 135; Wishnick (2014), p. 7.

<sup>261</sup> Gromyko (2015), pp. 158-159.

interparty coordination.<sup>262</sup> The experience with the Prague Spring reminded Moscow of the possibility of disintegration of the bloc and counterrevolution during the reform process. It deepened the aversion to socialist reforms, strengthened the tendency towards ideological orthodoxy and uniformity, as well as the readiness for military intervention to halt the negative processes under the catchword of internationalist duty and solidarity.<sup>263</sup> Shakhnazarov argues that Brezhnev—unlike Stalin and Khrushchev—was able to establish and cultivate good relations with the satellites' leaders and enabled larger inclusivity and equality in the relations within the Soviet bloc, which corresponded with the collective decision-making in the Soviet Politburo.<sup>264</sup> Ouimet argues that in the second half of the 1970s Moscow managed to reach a very high degree of control over the Soviet bloc but the centrifugal tendencies both within the socialist camp and the ICM were accelerating and coincided with the overall pluralisation of the international relations and the rise of new centres of power all around the world.<sup>265</sup>

The unity of the ICM fell apart definitively in the 1970s with the increasingly independent Eurocommunist parties in Western Europe and unpredictable China in Asia.<sup>266</sup> It was accompanied by the strengthening of the social democratic parties to the detriment of the Communist ones in capitalist countries. Brutents notices that Communist parties in developed countries became mass and popular especially as actors in the anti-fascist fight when they advocated an inclusive policy of cooperation with other democratic forces. The same applied to the Third World where they usually succeeded only if advancing broad anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist policies.<sup>267</sup> Shakhnazarov, who worked in the apparatus of the ICM, prepared meetings between allies and individual Communist parties and took part in negotiations, recalls that the ICM was gradually disintegrating. The last serious attempt to reverse this trend was the convention of the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe in East Berlin in 1976.<sup>268</sup> The trend was to hold meetings at a regional level, be it in Africa, Europe or Latin America.

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<sup>262</sup> Ouimet (2003), pp. 61-65.

<sup>263</sup> Ouimet (2003), p. 244.

<sup>264</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), pp. 239-241.

<sup>265</sup> Ouimet (2003), pp. 84-85.

<sup>266</sup> Disagreements about crucial issues, nonetheless, appeared even before, for instance, during the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in June 1969. Cherniaev was involved in drafting the official documents and Brezhnev's speech. The speechwriters made no negative mentions about China, being aware of that it would be opposed by some other parties. However, during discussions at the Politburo, a section criticising China was included. As a result, four parties (including the Italian Communist Party) refused to sign the joint declaration as a whole and the meeting brought no practical results in terms of the ICM (Cherniaev, 1995, pp. 270-271).

<sup>267</sup> Brutents (1998), pp. 137-138.

<sup>268</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), pp. 255, 270.

In contrast to the 1976 conference, a broader and more inclusive anti-imperialist forum organised in Berlin in 1980 was attended up to 77 Communist and 39 national liberation parties.<sup>269</sup> It showed Moscow that the traditional concept of socialist internationalism had lost attractiveness and authority and a new model had to be invented. The Italian Communists refused the socialist internationalism, favouring polycentrism and the establishment of a “historical bloc” with socialist and social democratic parties. The divergence thus regarded not only different paths to socialism requiring different tactics—these were recognised as legitimate by Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev alike—but the very existence of various socialisms.

Whereas the Eurocommunists accepted the political competition within the liberal democratic framework, the Chinese Communists considered the USSR an imperialist power similar to the U.S. and introduced the Three Worlds Theory. At the 1976 Conference of Communist and Workers’ Parties of Europe, the Soviets headed by Brezhnev did not push the condemnation of Beijing through and eventually admitted the possibility of polycentrism within the ICM.<sup>270</sup> Moscow made a significant concession to the Italians and agreed to replace the concept of socialist internationalism with “international solidarity”.<sup>271</sup> Five years later, the crisis in Poland once again demonstrated that the interests of socialist countries could clash with each other and marked the actual end of the Brezhnev Doctrine. Dobrynin and Shakhnazarov argues that Moscow was prepared to sacrifice the Polish ruling party if needed—Suslov insisted on the need to keep the country in the Warsaw Pact even at the cost of inviting the Solidarity to the government.<sup>272</sup> Analysing the Polish crisis against the background of the Brezhnev Doctrine, Ouimet arrives at a conclusion that the Politburo gave precedence to the Soviet interests and the politico-economic relations with the Western Europe over the support for the local Communists. “With the decision to make a clear distinction between Soviet national interests and the defense of East European communism, socialist internationalism had ceased to be a central tenet of Soviet foreign policy.”<sup>273</sup> This change of paradigm thus occurred before the launch of the Gorbachevian reforms.

The international commitments, nevertheless, lasted. The Soviet foreign policy underwent an interesting evolution in relation to the national emancipatory movement in the Third World and the world revolutionary process as a whole. Friedman takes note of a twist when the more radical Maoist China gave up her global revolutionary ambitions by 1976, while Brezhnevite Soviet Union

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<sup>269</sup> Brutents (1998), pp. 142-143.

<sup>270</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 52.

<sup>271</sup> Cherniaev (1995), p. 342.

<sup>272</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 500; Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 150.

<sup>273</sup> Ouimet (2003), p. 202.

went in the opposite direction, acting as the protector of the interests of the developing countries which was reaffirmed by the 25<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress in the year of Mao's death. Distinguishing between anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, Friedman draws a line between the foundations of the Communist regimes in both countries and argues that the primary objective of the Soviet state was anti-capitalism accompanied by a rigid class attitude towards both the internal and external environment. The cause of anti-capitalism also affected the predominantly Western orientation of the USSR, in line with the Marxist axiom that the socialist revolution is to occur in the most developed capitalist countries.<sup>274</sup> Within such a conceptual framework, the role of the Third World was only secondary.

On the contrary, Marxism was accepted by the Chinese primarily as a tool of national emancipation and fight against colonialism and imperialism. In other words, Marxism and socialism were not an end in itself but an effective instrument for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, hence anti-imperialism had priority over anti-capitalism. "Socialism was seen as the best way to create a new, powerful, independent China, and, as such, it was imperative that as many of the Chinese people as possible participate."<sup>275</sup> It enabled Mao to introduce the supra-class concept of *people's democratic dictatorship* instead of Soviet dictatorship of proletariat as well as the concept of *intermediate zone* which later evolved into the Three Worlds Theory. This interpretation was, however, opposed by the Soviets who warned that it undermined the ICM by addressing primarily the different levels of economic development of the countries rather than the struggle between the socialist and capitalist camps.<sup>276</sup> From the Leninist perspective, imperialism was a stage of capitalism only whereas the Chinese interpretation tended to the assertion that imperialism could not be reduced to capitalism, for it had existed before capitalism emerged and may exist after capitalism is overcome as the experience of the "social imperialist" USSR allegedly demonstrated.<sup>277</sup> The anti-imperialist cause facilitated Beijing to cooperate with a wide range of actors, which deepened after the rift with Moscow when China established relations even with anti-Communist regimes provided that they agreed on the anti-Soviet position—Pinochet's Chile and South Africa are probably the most striking examples in this regard. It seems to me that the different attitude towards Marxism and socialism, which was laid in the foundations of the Communist movement in Russia and China and which may be conceptualised in terms of the duality of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism can help to explain

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<sup>274</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 211.

<sup>275</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 12.

<sup>276</sup> Chen (2011).

<sup>277</sup> Lenin (1964); Friedman (2015), p. 215.

why China was more prone and open to pragmatism and reforms than the Soviets whose socialism and discourses were more theoretically-based, more dogmatic and subjected to the requirement of ideological purity.

In the second half of the 1970s, the Soviet leaders adopted anti-imperialism. “They shifted from peaceful coexistence to militant anti-imperialism, from an emphasis on class struggle to a greater attention to national, ethnic, and racial issues, and from an emphasis on domestic economic reform oriented toward socialising the means of production to a model based more on economic growth and restructuring the international terms of trade.”<sup>278</sup> As a result, Moscow deepened its global engagement and overstretch and in a sense became a “hostage” of the ambitious actors from the Third World who wanted to capitalise on the competition between the superpowers and the Soviet allegiance to socialist internationalism and the desire to resuscitate the ICM under the Soviet leadership.<sup>279</sup> Soviet diplomat Oleg Troianovskii, who served as the permanent representative to the United Nations and subsequently became the ambassador to China, observed that once a leader declared himself Communist, he could count upon Soviet support.<sup>280</sup> Leonov concludes that the USSR did not have sufficient economic capacities for a thoroughgoing realisation of its geopolitical ambitions and the initial focus on the construction of a robust state sector in local economies and support for the working class had to be replaced with an orientation to military cooperation as a result. According to the high-level KGB officer, the most hardline position was traditionally held by the party departments and Ministry of Defence in contrast to a moderate course followed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the KGB. In 1975, the Analytical and Information Department of this security agency drafted a material for Andropov, whereby warning against the power overstretch and the risk of a lack of resources for promoting Soviet interests abroad.<sup>281</sup> The Soviet engagement in the Third World lacked any thought-out conception and a sufficiently solid economic basis. There was no long-term plan of economic and trade cooperation with many developing countries. This unsatisfactory situation was amplified by the fact that Moscow sent lower-quality cadres to the Third World.<sup>282</sup>

Moscow’s heightened anti-imperialism, however, contributed to the vicious circle of confrontation with the U.S. and security dilemmas. The USSR was increasingly seen as an expansionist superpower. This image was fed by a number of interventions in both Africa and Asia

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<sup>278</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 14.

<sup>279</sup> Grachev (2008), p. 22.

<sup>280</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 325.

<sup>281</sup> Leonov (1995), pp. 115-117.

<sup>282</sup> Brutents (1998), pp. 301-303.

as well as the deployment of SS-20 missiles in Europe. All these actions were used by the rightist circles in the U.S. whose aim was to undermine détente.<sup>283</sup> Anatolii Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to Washington from 1962 to 1986, comments on the deployment of new rockets in Europe in the following way: “It not only cost us enormous sums but provoked military countermeasures from the West in the form of its own medium-range missiles, which were deployed in Western Europe in 1983. As a result, military tensions rose in Europe and the overall strategic nuclear balance shifted in favour of the United States.”<sup>284</sup> Dobrynin testifies that the American concerns over Soviet actions in Angola, Ethiopia, and Somalia were not discussed by the Politburo seriously and Washington’s vital interests were not taken into consideration.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, the invasion of Afghanistan followed. Notwithstanding the mostly negative attitude towards the Communists in Afghanistan and military assistance to the local regime, Soviet leaders let being drawn into that quagmire.<sup>286</sup>

The impacts of the intervention were more serious than Moscow had expected. The détente inclusive of SALT II was over, international reputation was gravely damaged and economic sanctions (especially the grain embargo) caused shortages in food and goods, stirring up workers’ unrest in Gor’kii and Tol’iatti.<sup>287</sup> Anti-Soviet sentiments and campaigns boomed in the U.S. The Reagan administration was obsessed by the intervention and considered it a direct threat to national security.<sup>288</sup> Dobrynin, at the same time, argues that détente might have failed in the future irrespective of Moscow’s military actions because both the Soviets and the Americans held different interpretations of détente as such. Whereas Moscow perceived it as a form of class struggle which would result in the final victory over capitalism, Washington approached this process through the prism of managing and controlling the global ambitions of the USSR.<sup>289</sup> In any case, the external environment became less favourable to the Soviet Union in the times when

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<sup>283</sup> Arbatov (2002), pp. 287-297.

<sup>284</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 430.

<sup>285</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 405.

<sup>286</sup> According to Aleksandrov-Agentov, the invasion of Afghanistan was Brezhnev’s biggest foreign policy miscalculation. The Soviet diplomat recalls that many in Moscow believed that the U.S. wanted to enter the Afghan territory instead of Iran which served as one of the arguments in favour of the intervention. Similarly, the Western actors were convinced that the Soviet side had initiated a military penetration to the southern seas. Aleksandrov-Agentov denies the existence of such plans. Soviet leaders seemingly understood their mistake soon since Brezhnev himself mentioned the possibility of withdrawal from Afghanistan in a speech on December 10, 1980. After becoming the general secretary, Andropov conveyed to the Afghan side that Moscow would withdraw its troops (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, pp. 243-247).

<sup>287</sup> Ouimet (2003), p. 96.

<sup>288</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 446.

<sup>289</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 468.

economic stagnation became evident. On the eve of reforms, the Cold War revived. Therefore, the leaders had to handle the international policy issues including the revision of external commitments as one of the priorities in order to create conditions for the implementation of reforms.

They, however, had to cope with the heritage and inertia of Gromyko's foreign policy too. The doyen of the Soviet diplomacy insisted until the very end that détente was destroyed by "aggressive circles of imperialism" with the aim to reverse the Soviet-U.S. strategic parity, obstruct the process of demilitarisation and maintain the class privileges of the bourgeoisie.<sup>290</sup> Even Gromyko, nevertheless, admitted the existence of universal interests beyond the class ones, first of all, peaceful development which required the end of arms race, elimination of nuclear arsenals and prevention of the militarisation of outer space.<sup>291</sup> By the same token, he admitted at a Politburo meeting in late 1986 that the deployment of the SS-20s in Europe had been a "serious mistake".<sup>292</sup> Moderate features of Gromyko's policies directed at the prevention of serious confrontation with the U.S., unless the vital Soviet interests were affected, created favourable conditions for opening doors to a redefinition of Soviet foreign policy posture under the new circumstances.<sup>293</sup>

Such a revision could also build on positive elements of Brezhnev's policy such as peaceful coexistence, détente, partially positive stance on the European integration process, economic cooperation with capitalist countries including Japan and positive perspectives on the American and German business circles. These points were included in the general secretary's speech at the Central Committee's plenum in April 1973, supplementing the Peace Programme which was adopted by the 24<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress in 1971 and set a possible roadmap for the conclusion of the Cold War.<sup>294</sup> Brezhnev's last speech at the Politburo on September 11, 1982 demonstrates an increasing tendency towards rethinking both internal and external policies and considerable weakening of the neo-Stalinist discourse. Cherniaev summarises the priorities put forward by the old Soviet leader as follows: (1) seeking paths towards normalisation of relations with China; (2) rethinking international affairs and situation in capitalist countries; (3) stronger emphasis on relations with capitalist countries; (4) promoting disarmament talks; (5) deepening relations with

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<sup>290</sup> Gromyko (2015), pp. 408-409.

<sup>291</sup> Gromyko (2015), p. 441.

<sup>292</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 82.

<sup>293</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 404.

<sup>294</sup> These constructive points coexisted with a negative attitude towards China which was identified as the main threat. Cherniaev (1995), pp. 292-293, 324.

Japan; (6) improving work of the party apparatus whose control role in relation to ministries was to be strengthened; and (7) analysing the domestic economic development in a critical way.<sup>295</sup> The late Brezhnevite period thus laid foundations for both the new political thinking and perestroika.

### 3.6 Findings

The socioeconomic development of the Soviet Union was shaped by Stalinism. This model began to evolve in the late 1920s, and its fundamentals endured until the late 1980s. The centrally planned economy enabled rapid industrialisation and modernisation of the country, and, in the end, the achievement of strategic parity with the most powerful country in the world, that is, the United States. However, the costs needed for this success were immense. The Stalinist model suffered from structural weaknesses that became evident in comparison with the adaptability, flexibility, and innovative capabilities of capitalism. While the Western model experienced a transition to the postindustrial era, the Soviet one was experiencing oligarchisation, weakening productivity, and exhaustion of sources of growth. However, it was not yet in a crisis. The Stalinist system was able to reproduce itself for many decades without substantial reforms, and it could have continued even longer at the cost of relative stagnation.

The conditions in China were different. It was connected with objective socioeconomic parameters but also with the internal socialist model itself. Despite the affinities between both Communist regimes, Maoist China did not consistently copy Soviet patterns. The Chinese model had its dynamic and peculiar features and was strongly affected by Mao's leftist radicalism, which led the country into isolation and on the brink of collapse. This experience paired with economic failure created favourable conditions for fundamental reforms. The Chinese society demanded stabilisation, peaceful development, and greater economic freedom in contrast to the Soviets, who were overwhelmingly satisfied with the status quo, saturated with social stability, security, and benefits, and were able to identify themselves with the existing model. Naturally, it complicated the implementation of the reform agenda.

The Soviet Union and China were different in many respects, starting from social stratification and economic conditions and ending with education, cultural life or patterns of governance. The rural and underdeveloped character of the Asian country contrasted with the industrialised Soviet Union, providing its citizens with social welfare, education, and quite wide opportunities for social rise. Contrary to the tradition of overcentralisation in the Soviet Union, Mao's China granted large autonomy to local governments and other actors, and these became engines of economic

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<sup>295</sup> Cherniaev (1995), pp. 439-440.

reform after 1978. There was a bottom-up demand for a new course in China, and changes often occurred spontaneously and without control from above. The Chinese society was interested in family farming, leasing, and market and largely welcomed the dissolution of communes. In contrast, Soviet society remained largely passive, conservative and prone to egalitarianism. And it made a difference.

Finally, the role of both countries in international politics was different. By the time when Mao Zedong passed away and the heritage of the Cultural Revolution was still felt, the Soviet Union reached its heyday, competing with the United States and being in the lead of anti-imperialist struggle. However, the global engagement of the socialist superpower did not correspond to economic capabilities and resulted in “imperial overstretch”. In addition, it contributed to a vicious circle of confrontation and security dilemmas with both China and Western powers. While Beijing initiated rapprochement with the U.S. already in the early 1970s and set out on a path towards building “Chimerica”, Moscow committed a serious mistake invading Afghanistan, thus contributing to the end of détente and the positive dynamic of Soviet-European relations. With the revival of the Cold War, Soviet leaders had to deal with international issues in a different way and significantly reduce the country’s external commitments if serious reform measures were to be taken.

Socioeconomic conditions in both countries were diverse, so micro-policies and practical measures could hardly have been the same. Yet it did not apply to the general strategy, that is, giving priority to economic restructuring while making political reform a second-order matter, and macro policies in individual economic areas. The following chapters show that China opted for the economy-first solution, whereas the Soviet Union eventually did not. But China-like neo-Leninist discourse, combining economic reform with the preservation of authoritarian governance, was strong in the Soviet politics up until the August coup in 1991, and the leadership was divided as far as the strategic reform pattern was concerned. Opportunities existed for both countries to follow the same path, respecting mutual differences. However, these opportunities were wasted.

## 4 Sino-Soviet relations and China's place in Soviet politics

China occupied an important place in the Soviet politics since the 1920s. The Asian country played a unique part in the Soviet history, being an influential factor in terms of both the internal development and external policies of the first socialist country in the world. This chapter analyses China's specific role in the life of the USSR and aims to shed light on the subjective aspects of the complex relationship which affected the interpretation of socialism as well as policy choices and decision-making not only in the period of reforms.

At the outset of the Communist rule in Russia, the perception of China was determined by the Westcentric perspective on the global development and the Communist movement, which focused on the revolutions in the most developed countries to the detriment of the Third World. The secondary significance of Asia in general and China in particular was, nonetheless, accompanied by positive sentiments towards the Chinese who fought hand in hand with the Russians in the Civil War and the awareness of the size and geopolitical role of China for the Soviet state.<sup>296</sup> Prominent Soviet diplomat Adolf Ioffe considered the country the weakest point of world imperialism and repeatedly appealed to the leaders to engage in the Chinese affairs more actively.<sup>297</sup> Future leader of the anti-Communist struggle Jiang Jieshi, who can hardly be suspected of liking for the Soviet Union, wrote that the Soviet Russia became popular in the Chinese society very soon after its emergence, for it was the first country to declare unequal treaties with China null and void.<sup>298</sup> It is beyond any doubts that China, however weak and disintegrated it was after the World War I, was perceived as the most important country in the Third World. That is why Lukin concludes that it became one of the major battlefields for the International Communist Movement.<sup>299</sup> Her role sharply increased after the Communist victory in 1949, which would bring mixed consequences for the Soviet Union. Chen points to the imbalance between the U.S. and USSR that was brought about by the defeat of the U.S.-backed Guomindang (GMD) and a consequent shift of the epicentre of the Cold War from Europe to Asia.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 98.

<sup>297</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 84.

<sup>298</sup> Chiang (1958), pp. 5, 14.

<sup>299</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 80.

<sup>300</sup> Chen (2010), pp. 2-3.

The events in China not only caused this shift but also created preconditions for a transformation of the character of the Cold War competition, which became more multidimensional and multipolar, especially after the Sino-Soviet split a decade after the establishment of the People's Republic.<sup>301</sup> According to Li, the split was one of the crucial moments of the Cold War due to which the global competition gained more realpolitik and geopolitical features at the expense of the ideological struggle.<sup>302</sup> Chen, in turn, argues that the Sino-Soviet split destroyed the belief in universality and unity of the ICM while Tucker agrees that the development of Sino-Soviet relations showed inadequacy of the dualist interpretation of the Cold War as a mere conflict between capitalism and socialism, between the U.S. and the USSR.<sup>303</sup> Furthermore, the ideological polemics and rivalry between Soviet discourses and Maoism had a strong impact on the internal discussions and policy choices in the Soviet Union itself and on intellectual emancipation alike.<sup>304</sup>

Whereas many historians agree that the alliance between Moscow and Beijing was the cornerstone of the socialist bloc in the 1950s, after the split and military clashes over the next decade, China turned into an "enfant terrible" and the major threat from the point of view of the Soviet leaders who were more afraid of the former ally than the Americans.<sup>305</sup> The Asian country can, therefore, be seen as one of the causes of the Soviet expansionism in the Third World, the increasing engagement in national liberation movements and anti-imperialist struggle in the most remote corners of the world. In this regard, China played a part in the Soviet "overstretch" and indirectly in the decline of the USSR as a whole.<sup>306</sup> Some high-level Soviet officials even argue that the split with China played a prominent role in the unprecedented removal of the First Secretary Khrushchev from his office, for the conflict with the biggest neighbour and the socialist power was perceived as a fatal failure of the supreme leader.<sup>307</sup>

## 4.1 Chinese socialism

The relationship between the Soviet Union and China was multilayered and ambivalent. It did not limit itself to bilateral diplomatic relations but regarded interactions with both GMD and the CPC. The ideological influences were similarly complex. The Bolshevik victory and the construction of

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<sup>301</sup> Chen (2010), pp. 5-6.

<sup>302</sup> Li (2018), pp. 2-3.

<sup>303</sup> Chen (2011), p. 106; Tucker (1995–1996), p. 502.

<sup>304</sup> Brutents (1998), p. 261; Rozman (1985), pp. 3-4.

<sup>305</sup> Li (2018), p. 64; Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), p. 41.

<sup>306</sup> Tucker (1995–1996).

<sup>307</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 349.

socialism had impacts both on nationalists and Communists, and Marxist as well as Leninist postulates and practices were adopted by different strata and groups of the Chinese society. The positive reception of Marxism had its historical and cultural reasons. It provided a synthesis between universalism and particularism together with the socially embedded theory and a programme to cope with the dependent position of China (imperialism) and her grave socioeconomic conflicts and problems (semi-feudalism and comprador capitalism).<sup>308</sup> It also corresponded with the Confucian notion of unity of power and knowledge, the related role of enlightened bureaucracy and finally with the traditional link between popular rebellion and dynastic change which matched with a revolutionary mission of the Party.<sup>309</sup> Marxism could have become so influential because of the internalised need for countering the Western interference and economic domination through an effective counter-ideology and counter-development.<sup>310</sup> Sun Yat-sen's *Three Principles of the People*, that is the construction of independent, democratic and prosperous China, could be reached by means of the application of some instruments of Russian Bolshevism during the modernisation period, particularly the Leninist conception of a state organisation based upon the avantgard party, militarisation and democratic centralism.<sup>311</sup>

Some historians, at the same time, argue that the Chinese Communist movement was shaped by Leninism rather than Marxism itself, mostly as a consequence of the specific historical circumstances when the CPC was developing amidst incessant military struggles. It gave only very limited space for the study and development of the Marxist philosophy and comprehensive theoretical reflections.<sup>312</sup> The collapse of close cooperation between the CPC and GMD and the failure of Moscow's tactics in China in the second half of the 1920s and the subsequent establishment of the Soviet Republic in Ruijin under Mao Zedong's leadership in 1931 created conditions for an autonomous development or Sinicisation of the Communist doctrine in China in the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, Chinese Communists put the peasantry and military struggle at the centre, which was supplemented with an emphasis on practice, supra-class alliances, self-sufficiency, and the role of politics and subjective factors ("superstructure") instead of economic determinism. In the Yan'an period, the so-called Mao Zedong Thought became the ideological

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<sup>308</sup> Arnason (2003), p. 318.

<sup>309</sup> Arnason (1993), p. 156.

<sup>310</sup> Vinogradov (2010), p. 120.

<sup>311</sup> Westad (2015), p. 286.

<sup>312</sup> Westad (2015), pp. 285-286.

core of the CPC.<sup>313</sup> Mao formulated the original concepts of *new democracy* and *people's democratic dictatorship*, which reflected China's specific conditions.<sup>314</sup>

Initially, the Chinese internal model resembled Lenin's NEP rather than Stalinist model since it included gradualism, mixed economy, alliance with the national bourgeoisie, and an emphasis on a balanced industrial development.<sup>315</sup> Friedman describes it in a similar way highlighting the focus on national independence and economic autonomy, development of means of production, agriculture and light industry when the question of the ownership of the means of production or gradual elimination of market mechanisms was only secondary.<sup>316</sup> At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, the specific Chinese path was approved by Stalin. At the same time, Mao had to put his external model aside and accept the Soviet discourse. The former was based on the idea of an *intermediate zone* which in fact situated Asia inclusive of China at the centre of the world revolutionary process. Third World together with Europe was seen as a buffer zone between capitalist and socialist superpowers which the Americans had to control to be able to confront the USSR. Such an interpretation reflected the anti-imperialist rather than anti-capitalist accent of the CPC. That is why the Chinese were pushed to give it up in favour of Stalin-Zhdanov dualist concept of the global confrontation between two camps.<sup>317</sup> Nevertheless, the theory of intermediate zones was revived in the early 1960s, being subsequently reformulated as a Three Worlds Theory.<sup>318</sup>

The moderate and pragmatic orientation of the postrevolutionary China culminated in the second half of the 1950s. Concurrently, Mao started to oppose this course and increasingly manifested interest in the tradition of revolutionary pre-war Stalinism, criticising both the Leninist NEP and the bureaucratic nature of High Stalinism.<sup>319</sup> Amidst the growing competition for leadership in the ICM, Mao launched the leftist policy of the Three Red Banners including the Great Leap Forward (GLF). The GLF drew upon the revolutionary Stalinism and War Communism alike, even though the Chinese went farther deciding to introduce the Communist practices immediately irrespective of the level of development of the means of production. Unlike Stalin, Mao put

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<sup>313</sup> Vinogradov (2010), p. 110; Westad (2015), p. 287.

<sup>314</sup> Mao (1954; 1959).

<sup>315</sup> Bernstein & Li (2010), p. 9.

<sup>316</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 119.

<sup>317</sup> Chen (2010), p. 5; Dittmer (1992), pp. 122-123.

<sup>318</sup> Lukin (2011), p. 16; Mao (1998), pp. 387-389.

<sup>319</sup> Lüthi (2010), p. 36.

stronger emphasis on ideological incentives, mass participation, and voluntarism.<sup>320</sup> The GLF gave priority to mass economic activity and decentralisation instead of bureaucratic central planning. “Mao’s goal was an economy in which only major macroeconomic variables and the large-scale modern enterprises would be centralised, leaving other activities to the provinces and the localities to manage, using technologies to their size and resource bases, on the basis of fiscal ‘self-reliance’”.<sup>321</sup> The Maoist model was typical of the accelerated development through rapid leaps, intensified mobilisation, work collectives modelled on military organisation in self-sufficient communes, enthusiasm of masses, ideological campaigns, comprehensive internalisation of ideological control and a positive role of war.<sup>322</sup>

The follow-up to the GLF was the Cultural Revolution which was based upon the mass spontaneous activity aimed against the bureaucracy and state apparatus except for the armed forces. These were used to the intervention of the mass movement.<sup>323</sup> Arnason argues that Mao’s vision of socialist society went beyond the categories of plan and market, party and state, science and ideology, evoking a utopia of popular spontaneity and freedom as well as a firm unity between the ruler and the people.<sup>324</sup> In this regard, Maoism was in stark contrast to Stalinism with its fundamental emphasis on bureaucracy, state apparatus and autocracy strengthened by repressions and central control aimed against popular activism.<sup>325</sup>

This outline is to show that at every stage of the development of socialism in China, the model had its specific characteristics and differed from the Stalinist pattern in many respects. The differences did not disappear in the post-Mao period when the leftist experiments were replaced by Dengist reformism. In a sense, the latter was connected with the NEP and Bukharinism which were suppressed by Stalin by the end of the 1920s. Deng Xiaoping lived and studied in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and even became a member of the All-Union Communist Party. This experience was widespread among the Chinese leaders—one can mention Liu Shaoqi, Li Fuchun, Zhang Wentian, Zhu De, and Yang Shangkun.<sup>326</sup> One third of Li Peng’s State Council, which was appointed by the 7<sup>th</sup> NPC in 1988, was trained in the USSR.<sup>327</sup> Many of them thus witnessed the

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<sup>320</sup> Bernstein (2010), pp. 15-16.

<sup>321</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 29.

<sup>322</sup> Arnason (2003), p. 323; Lukin (2021), p. 75.

<sup>323</sup> Lukin (2011), pp. 13-14.

<sup>324</sup> Arnason (2003), p. 323.

<sup>325</sup> Lukin (2011), p. 14.

<sup>326</sup> Lukin (2021), p. 77.

<sup>327</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 79.

practice of a socialist market economy under the control of the Communist Party.<sup>328</sup> Deng distinguished between capitalism and market economy, believing that socialist market leads to common prosperity which was conceptualised by a Confucian concept of *xiaokang*.<sup>329</sup> The combination of authoritarian governance, market elements, pragmatism and socialist framework, therefore, could have seemed viable to the Chinese leaders rather than the Soviet ones who were accustomed to the Stalinist pattern.

The differences between the Soviet and Chinese models of socialism affected the mutual relations and the possibility of adoption of the Chinese reform pattern by the Soviet leaders. Lukin introduces an original typology of the models which can help me to better address the divergent dynamics in both countries. Whereas the USSR was evolving along the lines of *bureaucratic Communism*, the development of the PRC was typical of the tension and clashes between *left-* and *right-wing Communism*. Interestingly, Mao Zedong resorted to different types during his political carrier. The first decade of existence of the People’s Republic was largely modelled on the right-wing Communism, which was formulated by Mao’s article *On New Democracy* in 1940. The leader’s leftist leanings, however, soon prevailed and led to a radical shift in the general line. Lukin argues that the rightist policy conducted by Mao was the only tactic to gain broad support in the fight against the GMD and it was given up as soon as the circumstances enabled that. The revival of right-wing Communism occurred in the post-Mao years. The position of the bureaucratic Communists was rather weak, even though the examples of Chen Yun or Li Peng demonstrate that this wing also existed.<sup>330</sup> But given the bureaucratic model of Communism was identified with the Soviet Stalinist model and the leftist policies became widely discredited and unpopular, the post-Mao leadership opted for the rightist course. From Lukin’s perspective, any of the three models does not abandon the final goal, that is, the construction of Communist society, nonetheless, they differ in many aspects as far as the transition period of socialism is concerned. The characteristics are summed up in the following table:<sup>331</sup>

<b>Model</b>	<b>Economy</b>	<b>Politics</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Left-wing Communism</b>	Full socialisation, direct distribution, enthusiasm and priority of	Social control under the auspices of the leader	Leader as a guarantor of the rightist line, immediate	War Communism, Cultural Revolution, Khmer Rouge, Castro’s Cuba

<sup>328</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), pp. 6-7.  
<sup>329</sup> Li (2018), p. 161; Pantsov (2015), p. 373.  
<sup>330</sup> Lukin (2021), pp. 75-78.  
<sup>331</sup> Lukin (2021), p. 73.

	ideological stimuli		contact with the masses	
<b>Right-wing Communism</b>	The limited existence of private ownership (SMEs), limited role of the market as a tool of distribution, material incentives	Control through state bodies in favour of the state and economy	Party-led bureaucracy as a guarantor of the rightist line	NEP, Dengism, reform Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Kadar's Hungary
<b>Bureaucratic Communism</b>	Full socialisation, planned economy, non-material and limited material incentives	Control through state bodies	Party-led bureaucracy as a guarantor of the rightist line	USSR (Stalin-Chernenko), majority of the CEE countries, North Korea

The Soviet model stressed the role of the party and state bureaucracy and although it applied material incentives, private work and business activities were prohibited and the autonomy of SOEs severely restricted by the central planning. Bureaucratic Communism could have found a common ground with the leftists regarding the need for socialisation of the economy, but the degree of politico-economic centralisation was much higher. Both models opposed the introduction of non-socialist instruments with the aim to build a solid and resilient material base for the later transition to Communism. Unlike the left-wing Communism, both the bureaucratic and rightist wings were aware of the importance of bureaucracy, professional education, and science, so the role of ideological (re)education, campaigns, and stimuli were rather limited, especially in the case of right-wing Communism.<sup>332</sup> The latter, at the same time, expanded the transition period between capitalism and Communism indefinitely which—in conjunction with the use of many instruments present in the capitalist society—makes it prone to the restoration of capitalism. This is to be prevented by the ruling role of the Communist Party as the basic element of Leninism.

In this line of reasoning, post-Mao China turned into a right-wing model of Communism and remained Leninist in its essence, which cannot be said about the late Gorbachevian Soviet Union.

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<sup>332</sup> Lukin (2021), pp. 69-72.

The possibility of restoration of capitalism and Westernisation was higher in the USSR than in the Asian country for historical and cultural reasons, which are intertwined with the peculiar civilisational trajectories of both countries. China was among the most remote civilisations in relation to the West, while Russia was the closest. Although Russia has not been a part of the West, interconnections with Europe were nearly countless and the relations lasted for centuries. “The Western impact on China was, in contrast to Russia, condensed into a much shorter span of time, was much more asymmetric (in the sense of the Chinese having less control over their own affairs) and was more explosive (in that it led to a more sudden and complete disintegration of the Chinese tradition).”<sup>333</sup> Sun refers to China’s negative experiences with the West and reminds that all Westernising projects launched before 1949 failed, be it the the Self-Strengthening Movement, Wuxu Reform, Late Qing reforms, the warlord period or GMD era.<sup>334</sup>

The development of capitalism was connected with (neo)colonial dominance, which made the Chinese seek an alternative model of modernisation since the Western one became morally as well as politically unacceptable. The former reason was conceptualised in terms of the “century of humiliation” which commenced with defeats in Opium Wars and subjugation of China by foreign powers. Chen relates these moods to the widespread victim mentality, which could have been overcome only by means of a different modernisation programme. It was provided by the CPC which succeeded in gaining independence from external actors in the country.<sup>335</sup> In this regard, Maoism opposed both Western model of modernity and traditional Chinese culture rooted in Confucianism. Lukin, on the contrary, draws parallels between Maoism and Legalism (*fajia*), which tended to undermine traditional social patterns through the actions of strong personalities and building military-style organisation of economy.<sup>336</sup> The voluntarist element of Maoism established an affinity with Leninism (Bolshevism) with its vision of the avantgard party and the priority of politics over economy which was in contrast to Western Marxism and Russian Menshevism alike. It can be, therefore, said that the reception of Marxism occurred rather in the Russian Leninist interpretation, which was subsequently sinicised to suit China’s specific conditions. The bond between Chinese socialism and the West was thus very weak—and weaker compared to the Soviet Union.

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<sup>333</sup> Arnason (2003), p. 311.

<sup>334</sup> Sun (1995b), pp. 225-227.

<sup>335</sup> Chen (2010), p. 12.

<sup>336</sup> Lukin (2021), p. 76.

The same applied to the reform period. Deng Xiaoping favoured learning from the West but did not call for Westernisation or joining the “mainstream of world civilisation” as Soviet liberal socialists did. The opening up of the country was aimed at the development of the economic base within the adjusted Leninist political framework enriched with restored prerevolutionary, predominantly Confucian, rather than Legalist, elements such as *xiaokang* and *datong*. The rehabilitation of traditional patterns contrasted with the Soviet reform discourses, especially the liberal socialist one.<sup>337</sup> The Soviet elites as well as intelligentsia were more receptive to Western thinking and socioeconomic model, many of them considered themselves Europeans and desired to make the Soviet Union and Russia a European country.<sup>338</sup> Brown highlights that many Soviet reform-oriented leaders and intellectuals gradually adopted Western concepts, policies and values while spurning the Communist reformism.<sup>339</sup> “By contrast, Deng, while aware that China was far behind the West economically, reflected the Chinese tradition—shared by most Chinese intellectuals—that Chinese culture and morals could not and should not be measured by Western standards.”<sup>340</sup> These cultural differences affected the shape of the respective reform processes in both countries.

## 4.2 Brothers in arms

The USSR and China established formal diplomatic relations in 1924 after all former bilateral treaties were annulled.<sup>341</sup> Moscow, however, developed relations with GMD and CPC at the same time, which created a parallel dimension in the Sino-Soviet interwar relationship and a complicated constellation, for these actors quite often fought against each other. Since 1923, the main ally was GMD headed by Sun Yat-sen. The cooperation included military support and training. Thus, Jiang Jieshi, a future GMD leader and the archrival of the Chinese Communists, was invited to Moscow in 1923 to learn from the Soviet military and politico-economic experience.<sup>342</sup> The modern Chinese army—the National Revolutionary Army—was established and built with an active assistance from the Soviet side and Moscow, therefore, boosted the military capabilities of the GMD and future armed forces of the Republic of China proclaimed in Taiwan.<sup>343</sup> Jiang spent three months in the Soviet Union and established a close relationship with

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<sup>337</sup> Hua (2006), pp. 9-11.

<sup>338</sup> Strayer (2001), p. 395.

<sup>339</sup> Brown (2004), pp. 91-92.

<sup>340</sup> Lynch (2012).

<sup>341</sup> Shen (2020), p. 14.

<sup>342</sup> Pisarev (2013), p. 140.

<sup>343</sup> Okorokov (2013), p. 32.

People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs Lev Trotskii. Despite the manifold practical results emerging from the cooperation with Moscow and Jiang's initial recommendation to Sun that the Soviets should have been trusted, he did not accept the concept of socialist revolution and perceived the Soviet Union rather through a prism of a threat.<sup>344</sup> The GMD leader said: "I came to the conclusion that our policy of aligning with Russia and admitting Chinese Communists into our ranks, though it might prove to be useful in fighting Western colonialism for the time being, could not in the long run bring us to our goal of national independence and freedom."<sup>345</sup>

The strategy and tactics of the CPC, which was found in Shanghai in 1921, were shaped by the Soviet comrades through the Comintern as well as a cohort of advisors sent to China. Jiang used these connections to argue that the CPC was the only Moscow's instrument to create and control a Soviet puppet regime in the country.<sup>346</sup> The reality was, however, much more complex. The CPC was made cooperate—and partially integrate itself—with the nationalists based on the policy of united front launched by the 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Communist International.<sup>347</sup> Some prominent figures of the GMD interpreted the tactic of united front as an effort to stabilise the CPC's position and expand its influence.<sup>348</sup> In any case, Moscow's interference succeeded in cultivating the CPC and mitigating conflicts between Communists and nationalists but given the poor understanding of the local conditions did the Soviet focus on the proletariat failed. The divergencies between the CPC and the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) led to the gradual emancipation and increasing autonomy of the Chinese Party. The establishment of the Soviet Republic of China in Ruijin by Mao Zedong in 1931 confirmed this trend. The different paths and characteristics of the Communist movement in China with its emphasis on the peasantry and guerilla warfare were authorised by Comintern in the same year.<sup>349</sup>

In the interwar period, the Sino-Soviet relations were considerably influenced by the controversies over Outer Mongolia, whose independence was recognised by the Bolsheviks in 1919, the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), which was constructed by the Russian Empire at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and over which a military conflict outbreak in 1929, and finally Moscow's meddling in China's affairs inclusive of the support for separatism in remote areas of the country. Specific problem was posed by the involvement of certain groups of Russian émigrés

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<sup>344</sup> Chiang (1958), pp. 19-23.

<sup>345</sup> Chiang (1958), p. 24.

<sup>346</sup> Chiang (1958), p. 11.

<sup>347</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 79.

<sup>348</sup> Chiang (1958), p. 67.

<sup>349</sup> Shen (2020), p. 50.

in Jiang's anti-Communist campaigns in the country, which was naturally perceived in a strongly negative way in Moscow.<sup>350</sup> A new factor entered the equation with Japan's imperialism. The Soviet leaders were afraid of possible confrontation with the Japanese in the Far East region and tried to prevent a conflict by the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway to Tokyo even under unfavourable conditions.<sup>351</sup> After the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was concluded in April 1941, Moscow recognised territorial integrity of the Empire of Japan's puppet state Manchukuo, which facilitated the U.S. engagement in China, for it seriously damaged the position of the USSR.<sup>352</sup> All the more so that Moscow closely cooperated with Sheng Shicai, a warlord who seized control over Xinjiang in 1933, and did not hesitate to assist the establishment of the the Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan, East Turkestan Republic as well as Tuvan People's Republic which was integrated into the USSR before the end of the World War II.<sup>353</sup> Mlechin observes in this regard that Xinjiang should have been an independent state entity with a Communist political regime and pro-Soviet orientation.<sup>354</sup> This fact was used by Jiang politically as the latter could have argued that the Soviet Union posed an international threat. By the same token, Jiang asserted that Moscow and Tokyo wanted to divide the Chinese territory among themselves, within which the Soviet side would have controlled Outer Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang.<sup>355</sup> Such an argumentation seemed convincing to his contemporaries given Moscow's repeated interference in China's internal affairs.

At the same time, the relations between Mao and Stalin were far from warm during the World War II. It was connected with several factors, one of them being the collaboration between Moscow and the GMD, which continued after the war. The CPC, therefore, sought pragmatic partners including possible cooperation with the Americans. This courtship brought tangible results in August 1944 when the Central Committee approved the establishment of the U.S. consulate in Yan'an.<sup>356</sup> The position of the Americans was also ambiguous both during the war and afterwards. By 1944, general and later ambassador to Beijing Patrick Hurley advocated the joint GMD-CPC government, which could be supported by Washington against the Soviet influence. High-level

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<sup>350</sup> Okorokov (2013), p. 42.

<sup>351</sup> Pisarev (2013), p. 155.

<sup>352</sup> Shen (2020), pp. 78-79.

<sup>353</sup> Pisarev (2013), pp. 172-178; Shen (2020), p. 81.

<sup>354</sup> Mlechin (2012), p. 61.

<sup>355</sup> Chiang (1958), p. 113.

<sup>356</sup> Mlechin (2012), p. 93.

member of the U.S. diplomatic mission in China Patrick Hurley, in turn, recommended to make a bet on the Communists instead of the GMD.<sup>357</sup> The game for China was, therefore, very complex.

Notwithstanding the negative stance on the Soviet Union, Jiang also acted pragmatically and respected the power realities at the end of the World War II. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance signed in August 1945 followed the tradition of unequal treaties which were imposed upon the Middle Kingdom by Western powers. Stalin's goal was to reaffirm the independent status of Outer Mongolia as a security buffer, keep the Northeast of China as a Soviet sphere of influence, and secure access to an ice-free port in the Pacific.<sup>358</sup> These objectives were reached by the August agreement with the GMD whose provisions were observed by the Soviet side despite Jiang's increasing pressure against Communists and encroachment on the Soviet interests in China including repressions against the Russian Orthodox Church and Soviet press.<sup>359</sup> The outbreak of the Civil War prevented GMD's plans from being realised. According to Jiang, these included the establishment of a democratic and constitutional political regime, national unification, and the improvement of living standards by means of the inflow of foreign capital and economic assistance.<sup>360</sup> At the same time, the Communist victory was far from predetermined all the more that the position of Moscow was not unambiguous for a long time.

Regarding the internal development in the country, historians provide different perspectives ranging from Stalin's negative attitude towards a military struggle conducted by the CPC against the GMD to the assertion that the Soviet leader used the official relations with the GMD to cover up his support for the Communists.<sup>361</sup> Indeed, Stalin could have been afraid of the emergence of a Communist China as a potential rival of the USSR and, similarly, of a direct involvement of Washington in the Chinese Civil War. Indirect U.S. assistance to the GMD was massive. The credits granted to the nationalists amounted to around \$2 billion, which was more than those provided to any European country.<sup>362</sup> Okorokov argues that the GMD's military successes after the end of the World War II were enabled by the generous American support.<sup>363</sup>

It can be said that Stalin's stance on China was ambiguous and he did not want to risk a large-scale conflict with the U.S. due to a support for the Communist revolution in the Asian country.

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<sup>357</sup> Kapitsa (1996), pp. 17, 25.

<sup>358</sup> Shen (2020), p. 110.

<sup>359</sup> Pisarev (2013), pp. 182-183; Okorokov (2013), pp. 146-147.

<sup>360</sup> Chiang (1958), pp. 133-134.

<sup>361</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), pp. 121-122; Pisarev (2013), p. 199.

<sup>362</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 125.

<sup>363</sup> Okorokov (2013), p. 144.

For both the Soviets and Americans was the focal point of mutual competition in Europe, not in China. In addition, a prospective victory of the CPC would call into question the Sino-Chinese treaty, which guaranteed advantageous conditions for the socialist super power. There are many evidences confirming Stalin's mistrust of Mao and vice versa. In May 1942, for instance, Petr Vladimirov, who served as Comintern's representative in the Central Committee of the CPC, wrote in his diary that Mao did not like the Soviet Union and did not consider the Soviets to be allies in ideology but an instrument for fulfilling his goals only.<sup>364</sup> In the course of the Civil War, nevertheless, Moscow took Mao's side, giving up the alliance with the GMD definitively. In May 1948, Mao sent a telegram to Stalin asking the Soviet leader for economic specialists.<sup>365</sup> A year later, he eventually declared the leaning-to-one-side policy while recognising the leading role of the USSR in the ICM in his famous article *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*, published in July 1949.<sup>366</sup> Despite the shift towards Moscow, Stalin refused to actively support Mao's plans to seize Taiwan and Hong Kong, referring to the Soviet economic exhaustion from the war and the risk of the outbreak of the World War III.<sup>367</sup>

The victory of the CPC over the GMD was welcomed warmly throughout Soviet society.<sup>368</sup> The consequent establishment of the People's Republic, nevertheless, brought a wide array of issues to be handled, including the revision of the bilateral treaty. Despite Stalin's reluctance, the leaders of both countries agreed on the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance. It secured more benefits to the Chinese side compared to the 1945 treaty, which led Bazhanov to the conclusion that the Soviet state gave precedence to ideological interests over geopolitics.<sup>369</sup> Yet Beijing would later insist on the unequal character of the agreement referring particularly to the provisions regarding joint enterprises, prohibition of foreign investment in Manchuria and Xinjiang as well as the permission to transport Soviet military units via the CER and the Pacific ports in Dalian and Lüshun.

Stalin was able to overcome his mistrust towards the CPC only after China's involvement in the Korean War.<sup>370</sup> The conflict had far-reaching consequences. It not only made the PRC a relevant political and military actor in Asia but also militarised the Cold War both in Europe and Asia. Li

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<sup>364</sup> Okorokov (2013), p. 154.

<sup>365</sup> Kapitsa (1996), p. 37.

<sup>366</sup> Shen (2020), p. 116.

<sup>367</sup> Kapitsa (1996), p. 44.

<sup>368</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 7; Gorbachev (1995b), p. 430.

<sup>369</sup> Bazhanov (2013), pp. 221-222.

<sup>370</sup> Gromyko (2015), p. 216; Shen (2020), p. 139.

argues: “The Korean War effectively militarised the containment policy. Before the war, Marshall Plan aid had been almost entirely non-military. U.S. aid now shifted heavily toward military rearmament. The war also marked a sustained militarisation of American foreign policy, with the Vietnam War a logical consequence. Additionally, the Korean War solidified the role of the United States as the world’s policeman and strengthened the country’s relationship with its West European allies and NATO. The war facilitated the rearmament of West Germany. It also impacted Japan and was a major factor fueling that nation’s economy.”<sup>371</sup> Last but not least, China emerged from the Korean War as a powerful actor with growing ambitions within the ICM, which was facilitated by Stalin’s death.

The socioeconomic development of the PRC was, nevertheless, substantially subsidised and boosted by comprehensive Soviet assistance. During the first five-year plan in 1953–1957, up to half of all Soviet aid designated for the socialist countries went to China.<sup>372</sup> According to Shen, more than 20,000 experts from the USSR worked in the country between 1949 and 1960.<sup>373</sup> The Soviets built over 250 large industrial facilities and contributed to the construction of many industries. The trade exchange soared and the trade with the Soviet Union accounted for around 50 per cent of all China’s trade.<sup>374</sup> Even though Stalin recommended moderate policies to be implemented in the New China inclusive of the existence of non-Communist political parties, private enterprises (SMEs) and autonomous trade unions, which was, *inter alia*, in accordance with Mao’s rightist course based on the theory of new democracy and people’s democratic dictatorship, the campaigns conducted in 1951 and 1952 brought about a virtual elimination of bourgeoisie and substantial socialisation of economy.<sup>375</sup> Nonetheless, Mao was increasingly dissatisfied both with Moscow-suggested rightist course and an excessive emphasis on heavy industry. The revision of policies in the USSR itself made Mao’s leftist turn easier. In the 1956 article *On the Ten Major Relationships*, he put forward new ideas aimed at overcoming the flaws of Stalinist model.<sup>376</sup> The internal revision was accompanied by a more assertive external behaviour.<sup>377</sup> Beijing played an active part in the crises in Poland and Hungary as well as in power struggles in the Soviet Union where the Chinese supported Nikita Khrushchev against his rivals.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Li (2018), p. 90.

<sup>372</sup> Shen (2020), p. 150.

<sup>373</sup> Shen (2020), p. 257.

<sup>374</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 223.

<sup>375</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 227; Li (2018), p. 69.

<sup>376</sup> Mao (1956).

<sup>377</sup> Radchenko (2019), p. 274.

<sup>378</sup> Shen (2020), pp. 182-184.

At the same time, de-Stalinisation and China's emancipation entailed first divergences, for instance, a different interpretation of peaceful coexistence. Whereas Beijing started to apply this concept to the relations between socialist countries, Moscow introduced it to its relations with Washington, which was unacceptable for Mao.<sup>379</sup>

China was willing to accept Moscow's leadership in the ICM, which was structured hierarchically and modelled on the principles of democratic centralism, less and less. The introduction of the principles of peaceful coexistence to the ICM was in breach of the Soviet-dominated system. Nevertheless, the initial reaction to the ground-breaking 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress in 1956 was positive in China and the 8<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress, held in the same year, appreciated the new Soviet general line despite some Mao's reservations.<sup>380</sup> These regarded not only the different interpretation of peaceful coexistence but also the nature of antagonism between the socialist and capitalist camps as well as the models of transition to socialism. Aleksei Brezhnev, who was a prominent figure of the Soviet diplomatic mission in China since the 1950s until the 1970s, testifies that the Chinese Communists held a critical view on Stalin and Soviet model of socialism even before the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress but they respected Stalin's role in the construction of socialism and the ICM and avoided any public expressions of critical opinions. Similarly, Mao did not criticise Khrushchev's interpretation of Stalin but primarily the way how the Soviet leader did it.<sup>381</sup> Soviet diplomat Mikhail Kapitsa, specialised in China and Far Eastern affairs, agrees that Khrushchev's speech at the Congress without consultation with foreign partners was a mistake.<sup>382</sup> First public manifestations of anti-Sovietism appeared during the Hundred Flowers Campaign which was launched in 1956.<sup>383</sup> The anti-Soviet attacks were accompanied by territorial claims as well as appeals for cooperation with the Americans instead of the Soviets.<sup>384</sup>

Unlike Khrushchev, Mao emphasised the role of war and the armed revolutionary struggle. It was reflected in the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties held in Moscow in 1957 as a new platform for cooperation and coordination within the ICM instead of the Comintern and Cominform. The conference agreed on a compromise between the CPSU and CPC, declaring the possibility of both parliamentary and non-peaceful roads to socialism. Even though Mao recognised the leading role of the USSR in the ICM, Shen argues that the event became a turning

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<sup>379</sup> Chen (2010), p. 329; Chen (2011), p. 103.

<sup>380</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 232.

<sup>381</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 49.

<sup>382</sup> Kapitsa (1996), p. 58.

<sup>383</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 40.

<sup>384</sup> Kapitsa (1996), p. 59.

point in Sino-Soviet relations. The Chinese leader's statements on the positive role of nuclear war under certain circumstances and surpassing Britain in 15 years were aimed against the Soviet counterpart in fact.<sup>385</sup> The second five-year plan (1958–1962), based upon the concept of the Great Leap Forward, was in sharp contrast to the policies adopted by the first session of the 8<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress. Mao's leftist experiment was to construct an alternative model to the Soviet one, surpass the USSR, and create conditions for assuming leadership in the ICM.<sup>386</sup> Gromyko, who visited Beijing secretly several times in 1958, recalls that he was surprised by Mao's considerations about a possible war with the U.S. and the Soviet role in the conflict. The Chinese leader allegedly asked the Soviet side not to engage in the war too soon as Mao planned to drag the Americans into the deep inland. Gromyko rejected such plans categorically.<sup>387</sup> Despite certain discord and problematic actions taken by Mao during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958, whose aim was to thwart the Soviet-U.S. talks and which were in breach of the Sino-Soviet Treaty on Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance because Beijing had not consulted the steps with Moscow in advance, Khrushchev sided with Mao and sent a message to President Eisenhower that any American attack against the PRC would be interpreted as an attack on the Soviet Union. This stance was later appreciated even by Mao himself.<sup>388</sup>

At the same time, Khrushchev's policy aimed at peaceful coexistence with the U.S. and the related thaw between both superpowers represented by the unprecedented summit in Camp David in 1959 provoked negative reactions in Beijing and resulted in public assaults on each other.<sup>389</sup> One of the most symbolic manifestations of mutual alienation and misunderstanding was Khrushchev's decision to withdraw Soviet advisors from China which had, moreover, numerous practical effects and damaged Chinese capabilities in many fields. The decision was justified by alleged bullying and persecution of Soviet diplomats and other Soviet nationals in the country, but the well-informed Soviet sources admit that the official pretext was false and provoked negative reactions among the members of the diplomatic mission in China including Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko.<sup>390</sup> By the same token, Gorbachev and Kapitsa consider Khrushchev's action a mistake all the more so that the Soviet leader criticised Stalin for the same decision regarding Yugoslavia earlier.<sup>391</sup> The situation deteriorated after the 21<sup>st</sup> and especially

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<sup>385</sup> Shen (2020), p. 189.

<sup>386</sup> Shen (2020), pp. 210-212.

<sup>387</sup> Gromyko (2015), pp. 220-221.

<sup>388</sup> Kapitsa (1996), p. 62; Rakhmanin (2009), p. 240.

<sup>389</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 107; Radchenko (2019), p. 276.

<sup>390</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 67.

<sup>391</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), p. 431; Kapitsa (1996), p. 72.

the 22<sup>nd</sup> CPSU Congress. While Khrushchev drew a parallel between Maoism and War Communism, Mao lambasted the Soviet leaders as revisionists.<sup>392</sup> During the Great Leap Forward, Mao radicalised his foreign policy in order to deepen the sense of external threat in Chinese society face to face with an alleged Soviet threat.<sup>393</sup> The Sino-Soviet split became a matter of fact.

Plenty of books have been written about the split so I can limit myself to the very essence of the events. Historians largely agree that the principal cause of the conflict was the competition for leadership in the ICM and differences at the level of ideology.<sup>394</sup> Troianovskii asserts that the split was mostly caused by the impossibility for China to play the second fiddle. Secondary were such factors as mutual inequality, cultural alienation and prejudice, historical grievances, territorial, and geopolitical issues.<sup>395</sup> Shen observes that the conflict of national interests was only the result of the split rather than its cause. The split was accompanied by the enlivening of old wounds as demonstrated by the Yi-Ta Incident, when the Soviet side initiated a movement of 60,000 Kazakhs and Uyghurs from Xinjiang to the USSR, and the appearance of the narrative about unequal treaties and Soviet hegemonism. Mao, in turn, played the nationalist card against the Soviets in his domestic political games with the aim to push through the leftist course. These actions resulted in a vicious circle of a security dilemma. Beijing started to perceive Moscow as the principal threat to China, while the Soviet leaders opted for the expansion of military capabilities along the common border and in Mongolia.<sup>396</sup> Soviet attempts to mitigate tensions through both bilateral and multilateral talks made in early 1964 were refused by the Chinese side. But the responsibility rested with both sides. Kapitsa argues that the main culprits of the split were Khrushchev and Mao alike. They became convinced that mutual conflict was unavoidable, which made the split a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>397</sup> Interestingly, Grishin blames mostly Khrushchev and his impolite and aggressive rhetoric about Mao for the deterioration of relations.<sup>398</sup> In any case, the Sino-Soviet split was not understood by Soviet society and people largely did not approve the spiral of confrontation.<sup>399</sup> The rising mistrust spilled over to the economic field. The trade exchange dropped to 5 per cent in 1962 compared to the 1959 level and by the mid-1960s it was

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<sup>392</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 203.

<sup>393</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 60.

<sup>394</sup> Zubok (2017), p. 122; Chen (2010), p. 9; Bernstein & Li (2010), p. 27.

<sup>395</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 347.

<sup>396</sup> Shen (2020), pp. 264-269.

<sup>397</sup> Kapitsa (1996), pp. 69-70, 75.

<sup>398</sup> Grishin (1996), p. 20.

<sup>399</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), p. 430.

lower than in 1950. While China's foreign trade with the Soviet neighbour accounted for some 50 per cent of all trade in 1959, the figure plummeted to a mere 7 per cent by 1966.<sup>400</sup> But even more important was the race for domination in the Third World.

As I have indicated above, Stalin was concerned predominantly with the European affairs and the Third World was of secondary importance in terms of Soviet policies. Khrushchev, on the contrary, focused on the (post)colonial countries and endeavoured to win them over face to face with the Chinese challenge, which became imminent especially after the 22<sup>nd</sup> CPSU Congress when the popularity and authority of the CPC was spreading even in such countries as France and Italy. The article *Long Live Leninism!* published in *Hongqi (Red Flag)* revealed the potential of China's discursive power throughout the world.<sup>401</sup> Beijing opposed the spirit of Camp David, emphasising the cause of anti-imperialist struggle. Friedman argues that the most severe direct competition between both countries over the Third World was going on between 1963 and 1965.<sup>402</sup> Irrespective of the criticism of Khrushchevite policies by the new Soviet leadership, Brezhnev launched a large-scale diplomatic offensive right after he assumed office, sending 82 delegations to 38 countries in the first five months.<sup>403</sup> The main battlefield was Algeria, Indonesia and the United Arab Republic. Nonetheless, China's global push halted after the Communist failure in Indonesia in 1965. In a consequence of the failure to organise the second Bandung Conference and the launch of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese position in the ICM and international politics as a whole deteriorated significantly. At the same time, the radical anti-imperialist discourse originating in Maoist China had a strong impact on the Soviet Third-World policies, and it survived China's decline as the Tricontinental Conference convened by the PRC and Cuba in 1966 showed.<sup>404</sup> Moscow's position can be summed up as follows: "The Kremlin was willing to support a more militant version of anti-imperialism but not if it risked actual war with a major Western power and not if it threatened to upset the global power structure that the USSR had helped construct and of which it was a major beneficiary."<sup>405</sup>

The change in leadership in the USSR opened the possibility of a thaw between Moscow and Beijing. Indeed, Brezhnev was interested in the reconciliation and took steps to make it happen

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<sup>400</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 245.

<sup>401</sup> Shen (2020), p. 262; *Long Live Leninism* (1960).

<sup>402</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 104.

<sup>403</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 127.

<sup>404</sup> Friedman (2015), pp. 146-147.

<sup>405</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 144.

inclusive of the suspension of the anti-Chinese propaganda.<sup>406</sup> The new leader—and he enjoyed support from Kosygin and Andropov in this regard—believed that Khrushchev’s removal could have been used as a serious argument in the normalisation of relations with China.<sup>407</sup> Brezhnev appointed a new ambassador to Beijing Sergei Lapin whose aim was to contribute to the new course.<sup>408</sup> However, Moscow’s insistence on its own vision of the socialist commonwealth and the principles promulgated on the last party congresses made the reconciliation hardly possible all the more so that the Soviets were confronted with Mao’s adventurism and radicalism. Zhou Enlai’s visit to Moscow in October 1964 only reaffirmed existing disagreements. The Chinese side insisted on the abandonment of the results of the 22<sup>nd</sup> CPSU Congress and the party programme, which could have been hardly acceptable for the Soviets.<sup>409</sup> A scandal provoked by the Minister of Defence Rodion Malinovskii on a reception held within the abovementioned visit did not help to mend the fences either. Instead of finding a common ground with the USSR, Mao launched the first test of the nuclear bomb and introduced a new conception of the country’s foreign policy. The latter was anchored in radical anti-imperialism, promotion of the world revolution through armed struggle and peaceful coexistence between the socialist countries. From Mao’s perspective, the world was divided between the global village (Asia, Africa, Latin America) and the global city (North America, Europe, Soviet Union), which contradicted the Soviet discourse based upon the competition between capitalism and socialism.<sup>410</sup>

The grand ideological polemic between the PRC and the USSR laid the conceptual as well as political conditions for the Cultural Revolution, reinterpretation of China’s place in the international relations and the acceptance of the scenario of a two-front war with both the USSR and the U.S.<sup>411</sup> The Soviet leader’s private notes from 1965 show that their author already reckoned to develop foreign policy under the circumstances affected by a protracted conflict with China despite his wish for friendly relations with the Asian country.<sup>412</sup> The situation was complicated by the absence of a comprehensive and long-term strategy on China and the CPC, which limited the scope for Soviet initiative.<sup>413</sup> This deficiency was aggravated by the fact that Andrei Gromyko and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a whole put emphasis on the relations with

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<sup>406</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), p. 102; Zubok (2009), p. 197.

<sup>407</sup> Aleksandrov-Agentov (1994), pp. 167-168.

<sup>408</sup> Brezhnev (1998), pp. 104-105.

<sup>409</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 97.

<sup>410</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 249; Shen (2020), p. 293.

<sup>411</sup> Shen (2020), p. 274.

<sup>412</sup> Brezhnev (2016), pp. 86, 104.

<sup>413</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 86.

the Western countries, making China as well as the Third World as a whole a second-order matter.<sup>414</sup> As a result, the Chinese agenda was dominated and shaped by the officials from the responsible departments of the Central Committee, such as the head of the International Department (1957–1986) Boris Ponomarev, who largely implemented hardline policies and were not interested in improving bilateral relations.<sup>415</sup> By the same token, many MFA officials believed that China posed a bigger threat than imperialism.<sup>416</sup> The lack of an unambiguous stance on the Chinese affairs are corroborated by Brezhnev's own irresolution. While calling for an active propaganda against Maoism, he spoke about non-interference in China's internal affairs and no need for criticism of the Cultural Revolution. Such a fluctuation can be explained by a low level of knowledge and understanding of the adjacent country. In his notes from October 1966, the general secretary admitted that he did not understand the developments in China.<sup>417</sup>

The insufficient attention paid to the country combined with the unpredictability of Maoist China and her behaviour, sometimes breaching the elementary rules of diplomacy. Brezhnev recalls that the Soviet embassy in Beijing was encircled and blocked by mobs since January 1966 and diplomats were exposed to both verbal and physical assaults. The Chinese even violated the international agreement when people burst into the territory of the embassy. Nonetheless, Brezhnev doubts that the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state bodies were informed about such provocations in advance and goes on to argue that these actions were mostly initiated by the Cultural Revolution Group and intelligence services with the aim to destroy bilateral relations.<sup>418</sup> In 1966 party-to-party relations were suspended and both countries accelerated militarisation. Even though Mongolia remained outside of the Warsaw Pact because of the veto from Poland and Romania, the Soviets concluded a military agreement with the Mongolians and deployed Soviet troops in the country.<sup>419</sup> Brezhnev's diary reveals that China posed a hot topic for Moscow and shows deep concern on the part of the Soviet leaders. Brezhnev was convinced that Beijing made efforts to provoke a conflict between the USSR and the U.S. and stressed the need for a formulation and implementation of a joint tactic of the socialist countries in relation to China

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<sup>414</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 404.

<sup>415</sup> Brezhnev (1998), pp. 56, 182. Neither Brezhnev nor Andropov and Kirilenko liked Ponomarev but they did not dare to dismiss an influential official who was protected by Suslov. Brutents describes Ponomarev as a dogmatic but also experienced, skilled and educated man (Brutents, 1998, p. 190).

<sup>416</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 202.

<sup>417</sup> Brezhnev (2016), pp. 160-162.

<sup>418</sup> Brezhnev (1998), pp. 149, 164-167.

<sup>419</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 29.

all the more so that the latter had gained both atomic and hydrogen bombs, which improved the country's position and reputation.<sup>420</sup>

The tensions intensified after the military intervention in Czechoslovakia. The Chinese side compared the action to Hitler's aggression against Czechoslovakia, Japanese imperialism, and the U.S. intervention in Vietnam, denouncing the "savage fascist nature" of the "Soviet revisionism" and "social imperialism".<sup>421</sup> Fear of Sino-Soviet war was widespread in both countries throughout the population.<sup>422</sup> The hostility culminated in 1969 when a new wave of armed clashes occurred. In Heilongjiang province—an epicentre of leftist radicalism during the Cultural Revolution—more than 4,000 border incidents occurred between October 1964 and March 1969.<sup>423</sup> The most serious clashes occurred around the Damanskii/Zhenbao Island in Heilongjiang and in Tielieketi in Xinjiang. Concurrently, the Soviet military conducted an exercise simulating attacks on targets in China whose leaders were alarmed by rumours about a possible Soviet nuclear strike. Soviet insiders, however, deny that any discussions about a pre-emptive nuclear strike were held.<sup>424</sup> Many historians observe that the most prominent clash over the Damanskii/Zhenbao Island was provoked by the Chinese side as a result of internal political processes. Preparations for the 9<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress were in full swing and Mao needed to strengthen social unity through mobilisation against the alleged Soviet threat.<sup>425</sup> Brezhnev adds that the incident was to strengthen the position of the military in general and Minister of National Defence Lin Biao in particular ahead of the forthcoming party event.<sup>426</sup> The Soviet general secretary was convinced that the incident was provoked by the Chinese side for both internal and external reasons, being a manifestation of "chauvinism" and "nationalism" pursued by Maoism. He believed that the Chinese wanted to show to the international community that it was not possible to cooperate and make agreements with Moscow.<sup>427</sup> Kriuchkov recalls that the conflict over the island was unexpected for the Soviet leaders who were shocked at first. The general secretary eventually took Andropov's side. The latter opposed the idea of involvement of regular military units in the conflict, highlighting the need for maintaining the clash as a local affair paired

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<sup>420</sup> Brezhnev (2016), pp. 110, 225.

<sup>421</sup> *Note Number 291* (1968); Hershberg et al. (2011), p. 13.

<sup>422</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 143.

<sup>423</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 33.

<sup>424</sup> Aleksandrov-Agentov (1994), p. 217; Arbatov (2002), p. 150.

<sup>425</sup> Okorokov (2013), p. 206.

<sup>426</sup> Brezhnev (1998), p. 177.

<sup>427</sup> Brezhnev (2016), pp. 368-369.

with the talks with Beijing.<sup>428</sup> The overall escalation made Mao accept the Soviet appeals for negotiations which were kicked off by a meeting between Zhou Enlai and Aleksei Kosygin at the Beijing airport in September 1969. Despite a partial easing in bilateral relations, the massive anti-Soviet propaganda continued in China in contrast to the situation in the Soviet Union where the anti-Chinese propaganda was mitigated.<sup>429</sup>

The subjective sense of threat from the Soviet Union, deepened by the 1969 incidents, paved the way to an unprecedented rapprochement between Beijing and Washington.<sup>430</sup> In September, the Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson stated that the U.S. would not stand aside in the case of a Soviet attack on China. Washington made efforts to deepen the conflict between the two socialist countries, resorting to disinformation operations within which the CIA leaked data about an imminent Soviet invasion. The Americans also informed Beijing about Brezhnev's proposals to establish a joint anti-Chinese front.<sup>431</sup> At the same time, there were actors in the Soviet establishment who advocated the idea of military action against China including Vasil Margelov, commander of the Soviet Airborne Forces so the concerns on the Chinese side were not baseless entirely.<sup>432</sup> Not surprisingly, the 9<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress declared that no socialist commonwealth existed any longer and anti-Sovietism became an integral part of China's official discourse.<sup>433</sup>

Although the diplomatic relations were restored in 1970 after three years when the sides had to get along without ambassadors and Brezhnev promised to abstain from any interference in China's internal affairs in 1972, Moscow's policy was aimed at containment of the Asian country and filling the power vacuum in Asia-Pacific that emerged in connection with the implementation of the Nixon Doctrine. The Soviet interests in the region were to be advanced through a wide array of instruments including the establishment of an Asian collective security system. However, Brezhnev's plan was supported solely by Mongolia.<sup>434</sup> Later, it would be brought back to the political agenda by Gorbachev, but his efforts would end in vain alike.

The strategy of countering Chinese influence within the ICM was embodied in the so-called Interkit. The platform was set up in 1967 with the aim to coordinate China policy among the Communist parties, institutionalise conformity through party channels and contribute to the

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<sup>428</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), pp. 103-104.

<sup>429</sup> Okorokov (2013), p. 227.

<sup>430</sup> Li (2018), pp. 138-139; Wishnick (2014), pp. 35-36.

<sup>431</sup> Okorokov (2013), pp. 229-230.

<sup>432</sup> Mlechin (2012), p. 190.

<sup>433</sup> Hershberg et al. (2011), pp. 15-16.

<sup>434</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 204.

global containment of Maoist China.<sup>435</sup> The central role in the Interkit was played by the CPSU International Department which was an heir of the Secretariat of the Comintern. This department was active in promoting the world revolution and as such, it differed from the operation and agenda of the foreign ministry which usually adhered to realpolitik rather than a revolutionary programme.<sup>436</sup> The main exponent of the Soviet interests in the Interkit was Oleg Rakhmanin, a neo-Stalinist hardliner who influenced the Soviet policies toward China negatively up until the mid-1980s. The platform organised 15 meetings with the participation of party officials, diplomats, and experts between 1967 and 1985 when it disappeared. “The purpose of these meetings was to force Soviet views of the Chinese threat on Moscow’s allies—the East Europeans and the Mongols at first, but later the Cubans, Laotians, and Vietnamese—and to keep these allies in line with the confrontational Soviet policy in the face of tireless Chinese efforts to split up the ranks of Soviet followers.”<sup>437</sup> Moscow wanted to control all spheres of cooperation between the socialist countries and China inclusive of economic, cultural and scientific relations. Hershberg et al. state that the control went so far as that annual trade agreements between any of the satellites and the PRC were subject to Soviet supervision and approval.<sup>438</sup> Moscow endeavoured to advance a joint trade policy through additional channels aside from the Interkit since 1973.<sup>439</sup>

Besides the Interkit, the Commission on China was established by the Politburo to serve the needs of this central party body. In general, such commissions were set up in the case of need, especially amid crises, for instance, during the conflict over the Damanskii/Zhenbao Island, attacks on the Soviet embassy in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution or the war in Vietnam. The commissions were usually chaired by Andropov, Gromyko, and Ustinov. Importantly, Rakhmanin

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<sup>435</sup> Wolff (2003), p. 442.

<sup>436</sup> Grachev (2008), pp. 10-11. Unlike the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Liaison Department, KGB and Ministry of Defence, the ID did not play an active role in Soviet foreign policy. Similarly, it did not deal with all regions, for instance, the U.S. was completely out of its power. In geographical terms, the ID focused on the Third World and partially Europe. It corresponded with priorities on the part of the MFA which accentuated the Western vector in general and the U.S. in particular. Moreover, the agenda and operation were affected by tense relations between both institutions and their heads, that is, Gromyko and Ponomarev. All in all, the ID was concerned with the financial support for Communist parties, publishing activities for foreign parties, education, recreation and treatment for cadres from abroad. The agenda was expanded in 1986. The department was to be responsible for foreign policy of the entire CPSU and for relations with both Communist and non-Communist parties in other countries. However, the new minister Shevardnadze prevented the ID from playing an active role in foreign policy very soon (Brutents, 1998, pp. 148-149, 164-171).

<sup>437</sup> Hershberg et al. (2011), p. 8.

<sup>438</sup> Hershberg et al. (2011), p. 10.

<sup>439</sup> Wolff (2003), pp. 452-453.

was a standing expert of the Commission on China, which created another channel through which he could exercise influence on the state policy.<sup>440</sup> These instruments demonstrate a change in the Soviet China policy, for it remained predominantly reactive until the mid-1960s in contrast to its pre-emptive and proactive character in the later years.

Even though the China discourse was dominated by officials from the Central Committee's apparatus and related academicians, there was a prominent institution with its own expertise on China, that is, the KGB. Its long-term chairman Andropov was not dependent on Rakhmanin and his entourage and cultivated own experts such as Iurii Galenovich or Viktor Sharapov. Leonov testifies that opinions about China differed within the KGB. Moderates argued that both countries were to cooperate, territorial disputes were simple to solve, ideological differences were not a reason for mutual hostility, and Beijing's cooperation with the U.S. was only a tactical step. According to Leonov, Andropov did not back the moderate views because he would have lost his position in that case, but he was aware of them and could use them when the political atmosphere changed.<sup>441</sup> Andropov's actual position was also indicated by his long-term dissatisfaction over Ponomarev's International Department.<sup>442</sup>

### 4.3 A tripolar Cold War

The Sino-Soviet split paved the way for the transformation of the Cold War into a multipolar competition. China emerged as a third important actor which entered the U.S.-Soviet relations making them triangular. After the decline in both political and ideological influence in the second half of the 1960s, the PRC made an abrupt turn in the early 1970s. It revived the relations damaged by radicalism and isolation brought about by the Cultural Revolution and established relations with 38 new countries in 1970–1972.<sup>443</sup> What is more, Beijing embarked on a journey of rapprochement with the U.S., which led to the normalisation of mutual relations and granting the MFN status in 1979 and gradual integration of the Communist country to the international structures dominated by the Western actors. Despite the deepening interactions with the U.S., the ruling CPC did not abandon the anti-imperialist policies. The cooperation with the Americans was aimed against the USSR as the “second imperialist superpower” which posed a more serious threat than the U.S. from the point of view of the Chinese Communists. They went so far as to

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<sup>440</sup> Rakhmanin (2009), p. 239. The Commission on China together with all others was dissolved by Gorbachev soon after his election (Cherniaev, 1993, p. 36).

<sup>441</sup> Leonov (1995), pp. 123-124.

<sup>442</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), p. 27.

<sup>443</sup> Friedman (2015), p. 195.

support NATO's role in Europe against the Soviet Union. Unlike Moscow, Beijing established relations with the European Economic Community and did not oppose the integration of the subcontinent.<sup>444</sup>

The combination of pragmatism and anti-imperialism, nevertheless, undermined China's position in the ICM and revolutionary movements around the globe. The left-wing forces often did not understand Beijing's good relations with Pahlavi's Iran and Pinochet's Chile or the ambiguous position on the Yom Kippur War.<sup>445</sup> China was not an engine of the world revolution any more, for her leaders concluded that the construction of socialism was hardly possible amid the economic impotence produced by the leftist experiments. From such a perspective, the revision of policies and cooperation with capitalist countries and notably the U.S. made sense. "The Chinese wanted trade, which got underway quickly, and military technology, which was slower in coming. The two countries began a limited cooperation against the Soviets, especially in the Third World, with the Chinese helping the CIA get in touch with small Maoist or anti-Soviet groups in southern Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Most importantly, Beijing helped the United States get out of the Vietnam War."<sup>446</sup>

The Sino-American rapprochement, however, was a thorn in Moscow's side. Leonov recalls that Kissinger's secret trip to China in 1971 provoked "hysteria" inside the Kremlin.<sup>447</sup> In his diary, Brezhnev describes China's cooperation with the Americans as "traitorous", being convinced that Nixon's goal was to use the relations with Beijing for exerting pressure on the Soviet Union.<sup>448</sup> Arbatov points to a paradoxical consequence of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement arguing that the latter accelerated the relations between Moscow and Washington inclusive of Nixon's visit to the Soviet capital in 1972.<sup>449</sup> A protocol from the Interkit meeting in 1973 corroborates Arbatov's assertion. The allies agreed on the need for expanding contacts with the U.S. to prevent Washington from playing the China card against Moscow and set the goal of developing cooperation with Japan to counterweight Sino-Japanese relations in conjunction with promoting the idea of collective security in Asia.<sup>450</sup> In the 1970s the Soviets made several proposals to the Americans regarding an alliance against China but Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and James Carter

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<sup>444</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 57.

<sup>445</sup> Friedman (2015), pp. 200, 209.

<sup>446</sup> Westad (2015), p. 369.

<sup>447</sup> Leonov (1995), p. 122.

<sup>448</sup> Brezhnev (2016), p. 474.

<sup>449</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 265.

<sup>450</sup> Hershberg et al. (2011), p. 94.

turned them down.<sup>451</sup> Brezhnev attempted to use his good relations with Nixon to convince the U.S. president of a “joint obligation” to prevent the Asian country from becoming a major nuclear power referring to the “peril” that China allegedly posed to both superpowers.<sup>452</sup>

Mistrust, fear, hostility, and ideological confrontation characterised the Sino-Soviet relations throughout the 1970s. The animosity went so far as to some 500 cities, rivers, mountains, and other toponyms in the Soviet Far East was renamed to eliminate the Chinese origin of their names.<sup>453</sup> Although Moscow was open to normalisation of the relationship, its containment policy accompanied by a massive military build-up in the Far East and expansionism in the Third World frustrated any signs of rapprochement and undermined the Soviet détente with the West in general and the U.S. in particular.<sup>454</sup> The number of divisions deployed in the Soviet Far East was increasing and reached 53 by 1985. Moscow deployed new nuclear missiles inclusive of the SS-20s, modern bombers and aircraft carriers. This build-up was combined with strengthening military cooperation with North Korea and Vietnam. Moscow was granted privileges at Wonsan and Nampo ports as well as overflights and landings rights for the aircraft, which enabled the Soviets to carry out reconnaissance of areas in Northeast China, Bohai Gulf and Yellow Sea including the military units in Dalian.<sup>455</sup> Vietnam’s aggression against Cambodia in 1977 outraged Beijing. China launched a military operation against Vietnam two years later, and although the People’s Liberation Army suffered high losses and soon withdrew, Moscow reacted with restraint, limiting itself to verbal denunciation. Border clashes between China and Vietnam lasted until 1992, and the bilateral relations were burdened by Hanoi’s engagement in Cambodia, which was seen as a manifestation of Soviet-backed hegemonism.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 201.

<sup>452</sup> Radchenko (2019), p. 278; Wishnick (2014), p. 60.

<sup>453</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 55.

<sup>454</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 7. The East German report on Interkit meeting in Sofia in 1971 shows that despite the intensive competition between Moscow-led Soviet bloc and China, the allies were in favour of rapprochement and normalisation of state relations with Beijing while deepening ideological confrontation with Maoism (*East German Report*, 1971). The overall assessment of developments in China remained very negative. The Interkit meeting in Moscow in 1973 agreed that a rightist turn had occurred in the country whose policies were “anti-socialist”, which emerged from the existence of “military-bureaucratic dictatorship”, its collaboration with “imperialist states” and “great-power, nationalist, hegemonic and chauvinist plans” inclusive of the ambition to become a leader of the Third World. The conclusion was unambiguous: “The fact that China is considered a socialist country does not change anything in principle for the assessment of the Mao Group’s policy. Maoism is an unforgiving enemy and antipode of socialism” (*East German Report*, 1973).

<sup>455</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 230.

<sup>456</sup> Li (2018), p. 181.

Vietnam was one of the battlefields between Moscow and Beijing for a long time, but the country eventually took the Soviet side. While China was deepening relations with Japan against the USSR, the latter was developing ties with Vietnam against the PRC.<sup>457</sup> The solution of the Vietnam-Cambodia question became one of the conditions of the normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations in the post-Mao era. The militarisation of the Soviet border regions contrasted with China's focus on internal economic development, reduction of PLA troops, emphasis on lower-budget nuclear forces, conceptual revision of state policies, and tensions between Beijing and Washington due to the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan after Ronald Reagan's ascension to the presidential office.<sup>458</sup> Under such circumstances, Moscow's behaviour was counterproductive and lacked rationality.

Despite the Soviet military build-up in the Far East and military cooperation with North Korea, Mongolia, Vietnam, and India, which had to arouse a sense of encirclement in China, the Soviet side accepted the Chinese idea of peaceful coexistence as a basis for bilateral relations in 1972, reiterating this position at the 25<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress several months before Mao's death.<sup>459</sup> Back in 1971, the 24<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress called for the normalisation of bilateral relations. In 1973, Moscow, in turn, proposed a non-aggression treaty.<sup>460</sup> These signals were, nonetheless, ignored by both Mao and the post-Mao leadership at first. China's position became even tougher in a sense. The 11<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress held in 1977 reaffirmed that the Soviet "social imperialism" posed a greater threat than Western imperialism, and the anti-Soviet clauses were introduced to the new constitution.<sup>461</sup> In March 1978, the Chinese side refused Soviet proposals to issue a joint statement of the Supreme Soviet and the National People's Congress on the adherence to the principles of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness.<sup>462</sup> In the same year Beijing put forward a plan for the establishment of a united global front against the USSR. Moscow was opened to accept China's basic demands regarding the foundation of the relationship but was

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<sup>457</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 44.

<sup>458</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 224; Wishnick (2014), pp. 79-80.

<sup>459</sup> Kosygin (1979), p. 629; Materialy (1976), p. 11; Wishnick (2014), p. 45. The sense of threat posed by the risk of encirclement on the Chinese side was strengthened by Brezhnev's focus on close cooperation with India, Mongolia and Vietnam, that is, neighbouring countries of China. Aleksandrov-Agentov, the general secretary's close aide, notes that Vietnam was seen as a crucial ally that was able to balance the American and Chinese influence. According to his memoirs, Brezhnev also considered the possibility of integration of Mongolia into the USSR in private (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, pp. 164-167). Such ideas must have irritated Beijing necessarily. India, in turn, was a pillar of Soviet interests in entire Asia. Brezhnev was even in favour of providing India with Soviet nuclear weapons or at least a technology for their production (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, p. 242).

<sup>460</sup> Aleksandrov-Agentov (1994), p. 170.

<sup>461</sup> Shen (2020), p. 334.

<sup>462</sup> Brezhnev (2016), p. 896; Kapitsa (1996), p. 101.

afraid of the country's behaviour. After Mao's death, Brezhnev declared that there were no objective obstacles to the revival of friendly relations with China should the latter become "more reasonable and peaceful".<sup>463</sup> The signals from Moscow, nonetheless, remained ambiguous. Talking to his East German counterparts in January 1977, a high-level official from the Liaison Department Boris Kulik changed nothing in the perspective on China whose regime was depicted as anti-democratic, militarist and anti-Soviet. Therefore, the socialist countries were to continue confronting Maoism.<sup>464</sup> The Chinese leadership was as worried about the Soviet threat as Moscow was about the Chinese threat. Both socialist countries got into a vicious circle of mistrust and fear and suspected the other of aggressive and hegemonic intentions. The military conflicts in Afghanistan and Vietnam only strengthened this perception.

The new course launched in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping opened the door to overcoming mutual animosity and ideology-driven misunderstandings. Talks on normalisation began in Moscow in September 1979 at the level of deputy foreign ministers. The head of the Soviet delegation Kapitsa recollects that their criticism concentrated on the following points: (1) anti-Sovietism as a part of the state policy which described the USSR as the main threat; (2) preparation for a war under the pretext of the existence of the Soviet threat; (3) territorial claims; (4) attempts to establish an international anti-Soviet front; (5) opposition to any Soviet initiatives in the field of détente and limitation on arms race and proliferation; and (6) assertive policy in relation to the Soviet allies.<sup>465</sup> Beijing, in turn, gradually formulated the "three obstacles" to be solved before normalisation: (1) reducing the deployment of the Soviet troops in the border areas to the pre-1964 level inclusive of their withdrawal from Mongolia; (2) withdrawing troops from Afghanistan; and (3) ending the support for Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.<sup>466</sup>

Negative emotions on the Soviet side were raised by Beijing's intention to annul the bilateral Treaty on Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Aid, concluded in 1950. At a meeting with high-level Mongolian officials in early 1979, Kapitsa commented on this issue in the following way: "It is necessary to publish information that the cancellation of the Sino-Soviet treaty on the part of the Chinese leaders is sharply against the interest of the Soviet and the Chinese people; it will further worsen relations between the two countries; it is incompatible with the interests of world socialism and it shows that the Chinese leaders are openly connected with the evil forces of world

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<sup>463</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 253; Brezhnev (1979), p. 590.

<sup>464</sup> Note about the Meeting with Comrade Kulik (1977).

<sup>465</sup> Kapitsa (1996), p. 108.

<sup>466</sup> Shen (2020), p. 340.

imperialism.”<sup>467</sup> In addition, the Soviet representative criticised Deng’s trip to the U.S. whose aim was interpreted by Moscow in terms of the efforts to bring China under the American nuclear umbrella and undermine the Soviet-U.S. relations. In a meeting of the heads of International Departments of the six Communist parties of the Soviet bloc in Moscow in February 1980, the Soviet side succeeded in pushing through an interpretation denouncing Beijing for an intervention in Vietnam and accusing it of “organising a military diversion against the progressive government of Afghanistan” in collaboration with the “cold war forces of the United States and the FRG”. Boris Ponomarev concluded on that occasion that Beijing was not interested in improving relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>468</sup>

Fundamental divergences persisted for many years to come. Interkit continued to characterise China’s reform and opening up as a “dangerous ideological pragmatism” conducted by “chauvinistic-pragmatic forces” and as a “modernisation of Maoism” which is far away from Marxism-Leninism.<sup>469</sup> In an internal document from 1980, the CPSU Central Committee argued that Wahington wanted China to be a military a political counterweight to the USSR and warned against U.S. supplies of dual-use items which could be considered military cooperation between both countries.<sup>470</sup> Central Committee’s directive to Soviet ambassadors in socialist countries from March 1980, in turn, addressed Beijing’s “differentiated approach” towards Moscow’s allies whose aim was seen in breaking the unity and cohesion of the socialist commonwealth and subsequent subordination of socialist countries to China. In addition, the Soviet Communists warned against China’s alleged attempts to infiltrate into socialist countries as well as against restoring party-to-party relations. Soviet diplomats were also called to pay attention to the economic and scientific aspects of cooperation with the Chinese.<sup>471</sup>

This security-based perspective coincided with a negative interpretation of post-Mao modernisation and reform and opening up. Politburo directive to Soviet ambassadors from October 1980 is very telling in this regard: “There is absolutely no basis for concluding, as some do, that Beijing’s alleged adoption of a “modernisation programme” represents a new political course to overcome China’s economic backwardness. (...) In China they do not hide the fact that “modernisation” is the best means of preparing for war. (...) There is no doubt that as China strengthens its military-industrial potential, it will advance further along the path to the realisation

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<sup>467</sup> Mongolian Record (1979).

<sup>468</sup> Polish Record (1980).

<sup>469</sup> East German Report (1980).

<sup>470</sup> CC CPSU Information (1980).

<sup>471</sup> CPSU CC Directive (1980).

of Chinese leadership's openly declared territorial pretensions against neighbouring countries in Southeast, South, and West Asia."<sup>472</sup> Similarly, the Soviet first deputy minister Kapitsa insisted on the "Maoist nature" of China's reform policies in mid-1982 and added that the Chinese side was not prepared to cooperate with Moscow on an equal basis.<sup>473</sup>

#### 4.4 A thorny road to normalisation

Mao's death created a new opportunity for revising the status quo in bilateral relations. However, inertia persisted for several years to come. One event demonstrates how poor the relations were by 1976. In response to Mao's decease, the Central Committee of the CPSU sent an official telegram to the CPC. However, the Chinese side refused to accept it.<sup>474</sup> In October 1977, the Soviet leader wrote in his diary that the risk of Beijing's attack against the USSR was a real scenario.<sup>475</sup> The embassy in Beijing started to promote the improvement of the relationship but high-level officials in both state and party bodies opposed it actively. Prominent diplomat Brezhnev, who remained in China irrespective of several changes of ambassadors in the Brezhnevite period, was sent back to Moscow in 1978. The reasons for his withdrawal were conveyed to him by Mikhail Kapitsa who managed the Far East Department at the MFA. Brezhnev was told that positive information about China as well as his proposals to end propaganda against Maoism were not welcomed in Moscow. Paradoxically, the same Kapitsa became a target of criticism for his positive assessment of the developments in China upon his return from the Asian country several years later.<sup>476</sup>

Aleksandrov-Agentov, in turn, testifies that some Brezhnev's initiatives to improve relations with China were blocked by officials from both the Central Committee and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>477</sup> In the security milieu, China remained to be perceived as a serious threat. In a report about the KGB operations in 1981 was Brezhnev informed about "hostile activities" of China's intelligence services against the USSR and the disclosure and expulsion of Chinese spies from the country.<sup>478</sup> Of special interest is a plan of cooperation against China between KGB and Czechoslovak Federal Ministry of the Interior from late 1983. Both security bodies agreed on cooperation in the following areas: (1) countering and exposing the subversive activity of the

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<sup>472</sup> CPSU CC Politburo Directive (1980).

<sup>473</sup> The State of Foreign Policy (1982).

<sup>474</sup> Brezhnev (2016), p. 684.

<sup>475</sup> Brezhnev (2016), p. 847.

<sup>476</sup> Brezhnev (1998), pp. 229-233.

<sup>477</sup> Aleksandrov-Agentov (1994), p. 171.

<sup>478</sup> Otchet o rabote (1982).

Chinese leadership directed at eroding the unity and cohesion of the socialist commonwealth and the international Communist and workers' movement; (2) exerting an influence on the Chinese leadership and the broad strata of the population favourable to the socialist commonwealth and directed at tearing the PRC away from the West; (3) resisting to China's relations to the U.S., Japan, and other imperialist countries in the political, economic, and military spheres, and deepening of differences among them; (4) exposing the hegemonic ambitions of Beijing in Asia with respect to the developing countries and the Non-Aligned Movement; (5) promoting the rift and dismantling of pro-Chinese groups in third countries; and (6) discrediting China's cooperation with reactionary regimes, particularly in Chile and South Africa.<sup>479</sup> This document shows a high degree of coordination on China policies through the state and party apparatuses in the socialist commonwealth.

The China-related issues were also discussed at a republic level, as demonstrated by a document elaborated by Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early 1982, in which the department warned against China's alleged hegemonism and militarism.<sup>480</sup> A similar narrative appeared in the reports of the Soviet embassy in Beijing. A document from March asserted that Maoism was reviving, economic processes were getting out of control and "bourgeois influence" and overall instability were on the rise. China was accused of destabilising the international situation and making territorial claims in relation to the Soviet Union and criticised for attempts to create anti-Soviet front including Japan, U.S., and Western Europe.<sup>481</sup> Scepticism towards China was shared by Gromyko himself even amidst reform aspirations around the half of the 1980s. When Oleg Troianovskii was appointed the new ambassador to Beijing in early 1986, he met his former superior and told him that the incumbent Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze set him a task to normalise Sino-Soviet relations. Gromyko allegedly answered that it would not happen because of too close links between Beijing and Washington.<sup>482</sup>

Notwithstanding these obstacles, both sides managed to conclude an agreement on border navigation in 1977, which entailed the lifting of a blockade on China's navigation on the Amur river imposed in 1967.<sup>483</sup> The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan resulted in suspension of the bilateral negotiation process and it was reopened as late as in the last year of Brezhnev's rule. The physically unfit leader managed to send positive signals to Beijing and revive his initial efforts from

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<sup>479</sup> Plan of Cooperation (1983).

<sup>480</sup> O sostoianii kitaiskikh vooruzhennykh sil (1982).

<sup>481</sup> Annotatsiia politicheskogo otcheta (1982).

<sup>482</sup> Mlechin (2012), p. 227.

<sup>483</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 46.

1964 aimed at normalisation of the relations. During his trip to Kazakhstan in August 1980, Brezhnev admitted that changes were going on in China. The statement indicated a new Soviet perspective on China at the official level for the first time.<sup>484</sup> At the 26<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress, Brezhnev reiterated his stance from Alma-Ata, subsequently making a speech in March 1982 which Radchenko considers “one of the most important policy statements he had ever made”.<sup>485</sup> In this Tashkent speech, the Soviet leader recognised China as a socialist country while emphasising—in the September speech in Baku—that Moscow regarded the relations with Beijing as a matter of high importance and the prospects of their normalisation as necessary.<sup>486</sup> This trio of speeches delivered in Alma-Ata, Tashkent and Baku can be considered crucial in terms of a revision of China policy. A month later, Brezhnev called for the normalisation before an assembly of high-level military and party representatives.<sup>487</sup> At the Politburo meeting held on September 9, the general secretary warned against critical articles on China in Soviet press and argued that those would complicate the bilateral dialogue. Such a situation was to be prevented.<sup>488</sup>

This political line was embraced by Andropov who accelerated the efforts to reach normalisation. Troianovskii testifies that although Andropov followed the official critical stance on China both during the Cultural Revolution and after Mao’s death, he wished for rapprochement in the future.<sup>489</sup> The general secretary considered the situation experienced during the last two decades an “abberation” and highlighted the need for improving bilateral relations.<sup>490</sup> Similarly, Chernenko used to speak out in favour of normalisation and win-win cooperation in economy, culture, science and other fields. Konstantin Ustinovich acknowledged that China played a positive role in strengthening the positions of socialism and peace at the international level.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Bovin (2003), p. 379.

<sup>485</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 10.

<sup>486</sup> Miller (2016), p. 44; Wishnick (2014), p. 76.

<sup>487</sup> Rozman (1983), p. 216. Yet Beijing remained worried about Soviet intentions. Deng Xiaoping described Chinese concerns to Pakistani president in the following way: “The entire Soviet army was not as big as it is now. After Brezhnev came to power, he deployed one-third of the strategic nuclear weapons and one million troops on the Sino-Soviet border. It was Brezhnev who sent troops to Czechoslovakia, invaded Afghanistan and the Middle East, and supported Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia. Therefore it cannot be said that Brezhnev was a moderate” (*Excerpts of Talks*, 1982c).

<sup>488</sup> Zasedanie Politbiuro (1982).

<sup>489</sup> Troianovskii (1997), pp. 310, 354.

<sup>490</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 504.

<sup>491</sup> Chernenko (1985), pp. 30, 118.

This perspective led to a reassessment of sources of international tension, among which China did not appear anymore.<sup>492</sup>

The highest Soviet representatives took constructive steps despite a resistance from anti-Chinese hardliners in the party and state apparatus, which continued to use the Interkit for advancing their particular interests. While Rakhmanin insisted on the concept of “Maoism without Mao”, whereby denying any internal changes in the PRC, East Germans opposed such an utterly biased interpretation. At the 1982 meeting, Erich Honecker refused to sign the final protocol and criticised Interkit’s anti-Chinese policy. At the same meeting, Rakhmanin went so far as to challenge and misinterpret Brezhnev’s Tashkent speech.<sup>493</sup> Concurrently, Rakhmanin pushed Honecker not to maintain friendly relations with Beijing.<sup>494</sup> The last Interkit meeting, which was held in Moscow in a couple of weeks before Gorbachev’s election, demonstrates the resilience of Rakhmanin’s hardline policy, his long-term efforts to preserve the anti-Chinese narrative as the official party course and the rejection of the development of pragmatic relations at different levels between China and countries of the Soviet bloc. The latter entailed the priority of political and ideological criteria over economic and cultural ones, which made normal cooperation with Beijing hardly possible. A Polish report on the February meeting depicts the position of the CPSU (that is, Rakhmanin’s) as follows: “The CC CPSU concludes that the present anti-socialist line in the PRC’s foreign policy is long-term and [includes] strategic cooperation with American imperialism. Beijing thinks that by weakening the USSR and the entire socialist commonwealth it will be able to carry out its own great power and hegemonic ambitions. Objectively speaking, there is a dangerous resemblance between China’s strategy and that of U.S. imperialism: Reagan wants to open the Eastern front against the USSR; Beijing aspires to strengthen its military potential for hegemonic purposes and seeks military cooperation with the U.S. in this respect. Together, this is a joint aspiration of Beijing and U.S. imperialism in order to

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<sup>492</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 657.

<sup>493</sup> Hershberg et al. (2011), pp. 25-26. Rakhmanin’s behaviour provoked conflicts not only with allies but also within the Soviet apparatus. In his records made in May and July 1982, Cherniaev describes disputes with Rakhmanin regarding the latter’s actions in relation to the Interkit May meeting in Sofia and subsequent session of the Politburo Commission on China. Upon the conclusion of the Sofia meeting, Rakhmanin drafted a report for the Central Committee. Yet Cherniaev refused to sign it because the content contradicted Brezhnev’s position presented in Tashkent. Similarly, Rakhmanin insisted on the existence of the Chinese threat at the commission’s meeting. However, Brezhnev, Andropov as well as Ponomarev spoke out in favour of cooperation with Beijing at the Politburo. Ponomarev told Cherniaev that Rakhmanin had made his career on the fight against China and so he was personally interested in preserving status quo, moreover, he was seeking a membership in the Academy of Sciences by that time, therefore, he had to insist on the correctness of his long-term hardline position (Cherniaev, 2008, pp. 486-487). These records illuminate further circumstances of the struggle for a new China policy.

<sup>494</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 20.

change the global system to the disadvantage of the USSR and the entire socialist commonwealth.”<sup>495</sup> Even though Rakhmanin made his best to reach unanimity within the Interkit, he eventually failed.

The predominantly anti-Chinese position of the Interkit, nevertheless, undermined the potential of the revival of Sino-Soviet relations. Given these mixed signals, is it not so surprising that Beijing’s reaction to the constructive statements made by Brezhnev and Andropov was reserved and cautious. Nevertheless, the Chinese side declared that it was prepared for the talks on normalisation.<sup>496</sup> Beijing insisted on its three obstacles to be eliminated. The Soviet leadership was not prepared to comply with these unilateral requirements at first, but it did favour the launch of talks. Even though belonging to the sceptics as far as China was concerned, Andrei Gromyko proposed a cut in the Soviet military presence both along the border and in Mongolia at the Politburo session in May 1983. However, such a proposal was categorically refused by Dmitrii Ustinov, while the possibility of changing positions on Afghanistan and Cambodia remained out of question for the time being.<sup>497</sup>

In the meanwhile, nevertheless, the first political consultations were held in Beijing in October 1982 after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials Kapitsa’s and Tikhvinskii’s visit to the country earlier that year.<sup>498</sup> In November, Gromyko met his Chinese counterpart Huang Hua in Moscow.<sup>499</sup> Since September 1983 mutual exchanges at the level of vice ministers were launched when Kapitsa arrived in Beijing, being followed by talks between vice premiers since December 1984. That month, Soviet deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers Ivan Arkhipov visited the Chinese capital and was warmly received all the more so that he worked in the country in the 1950s, which made the visit very symbolic.<sup>500</sup> On that occasion, several agreements were concluded covering economic, technological and scientific cooperation.<sup>501</sup> The bilateral relations were warming thanks to “funeral diplomacy” within which the Chinese leaders attended funerals of their Soviet counterparts—Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko. The Chinese side used the opportunity to officially recognise the USSR socialist country after more than two decades and declare the

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<sup>495</sup> Note from a Working Meeting (1985).

<sup>496</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 76.

<sup>497</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 77.

<sup>498</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 34; Miller (2015), p. 205.

<sup>499</sup> Shen (2020), p. 361.

<sup>500</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 270.

<sup>501</sup> Shen (2020), p. 365. In contrast, at an Interkit meeting in Moscow in February 1985, Rakhmanin declared that the official assessment of the political results of Arkhipov’s visit to China was “strongly negative” (*Note from a Working Meeting*, 1985).

preparedness to restore normal political relations. Moscow, in turn, reiterated the need for normalisation and invited the Chinese to the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress.<sup>502</sup>

While speaking at the first CC plenum after his election, the new general secretary Gorbachev did not hesitate to emphasise that the Soviet side wanted substantial improvements in bilateral relations. He appreciated Beijing's negative position on the militarisation of outer space as well as their decision to give up the nuclear first-use policy, following the USSR.<sup>503</sup> During a speech at the MFA in May 1986, Gorbachev argued that good neighbour relations with China were as important as the relations with the U.S.<sup>504</sup> Gorbachev decided to send positive signals to Beijing in the same way as Brezhnev did more than two decades before. He replaced Ambassador Il'ia Shcherbakov with Oleg Troianovskii who moved to Beijing from New York where he represented the country at the UN. Such a choice indicated a strong emphasis on China as well as the interest in normalisation. Gorbachev sought an experienced professional diplomat with connections to China instead of a party official. Indeed, Troianovskii accompanied Khrushchev and Kosygin to China in 1958 and 1965 respectively so he was acquainted with the intricate history of mutual relations immediately.<sup>505</sup> Gorbachev's decision was appreciated in Beijing accordingly. The Chinese side interpreted it as a message that the Soviet counterparts were prepared for serious negotiations and improvement of relations.<sup>506</sup> Even though the new ambassador was given the task to act in favour of the prospective normalisation and keep an eye on the ongoing reforms in the Asian country, he concludes that the information conveyed by the diplomatic mission and numerous visitors from the Soviet Union were not used sufficiently and efficiently by the decision-makers in Moscow.<sup>507</sup>

Political negotiations between both countries did not progress for a long time. The lack of improvement at the political level was addressed by the Soviet leader repeatedly. In mid-1986, Gorbachev stated that Beijing was hindering the development of political relations and continued its attempts to create divisions between the USSR and its allies.<sup>508</sup> In December that year, the general secretary concluded that the Chinese side was not interested in the normalisation of party-to-party relations and coordination of foreign policy with other socialist countries because

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<sup>502</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 273.

<sup>503</sup> Gorbachev (2008c), p. 170.

<sup>504</sup> Gorbachev (2008d), p. 130.

<sup>505</sup> Troianovskii (1997), pp. 344-345.

<sup>506</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 358.

<sup>507</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 363.

<sup>508</sup> Gorbachev (2008d), p. 170.

of Beijing's interests in the West as well as the Third World.<sup>509</sup> Several months later, he vocalised his opinion that China was willing to develop relations with all socialist countries except for the USSR not to undermine her relations with the Americans.<sup>510</sup> In May 1987 Gorbachev admitted that the talks came to a deadlock. The main problem was posed by Beijing's insistence on the "three obstacles" and Moscow's reluctance to deal with them, especially as far as the Vietnam-Cambodia issue was concerned.<sup>511</sup>

Not less importantly, the Soviet leader did not want China to become the model for others to follow and continued to insist on a coordinated policy towards China throughout the disintegrating Soviet bloc, even though the role of Interkit plummeted. He criticised Erich Honecker and Todor Zhivkov for improving the relationship with Beijing. In a private conversation with his aides, Gorbachev commented on the East German leader's talks with the Chinese with displeasure, arguing that no one had authorised him to do so. Talking to the general secretary of the Portuguese Communist Party, the Soviet leader criticised Honecker's visit to China and accused his East German counterpart of gaining one-sided benefits to the detriment of the interests of the entire socialist commonwealth.<sup>512</sup> When Zhivkov appreciated China's developments during a meeting with Gorbachev in May 1987, Mikhail Sergeevich was very critical. The latter expressed dissatisfaction with insufficient progress in Sino-Soviet bilateral relations due to Beijing's stake in relations with the West.<sup>513</sup> Two months later, Gorbachev in turn told Gandhi that the economic progress in the Asian country served only to the interests of elites, not the people and mentioned the need for containing China's global ambitions.<sup>514</sup>

At the same time, Gorbachev emphasised the need for the acceleration of bilateral relations at all levels. Economic relations were expanding. After returning to the levels observed in the years of closest cooperation in the 1950s, trade exchanges surged during the 1980s and culminated in 1990 when the volume equalled \$5.2 billion compared to \$1.8 billion in 1988.<sup>515</sup> Despite this dynamic did the share of mutual trade exchanges remain marginal within the overall balance of both countries.<sup>516</sup> The USSR sold raw materials and heavy industrial products to the Chinese

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<sup>509</sup> Gorbachev (2008e), p. 338.

<sup>510</sup> Gorbachev (2008f), p. 405.

<sup>511</sup> Zubok (2017), pp. 129-130.

<sup>512</sup> Gorbachev (2008e), pp. 339-340.

<sup>513</sup> Gorbachev (2008e), p. 459.

<sup>514</sup> Gorbachev (2008g), p. 238.

<sup>515</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 103.

<sup>516</sup> Zubok (2017), p. 134.

while the Asian country exported agricultural and light industrial, mostly low-quality products to the Soviet Union.<sup>517</sup> Local trade experienced even more rapid boom. Only in Heilongjiang and Xinjiang provinces, border trade soared by nearly 4,000 per cent between 1983 and 1988. Dittmer shows that the total Sino-Soviet border trade increased by virtually 20 times from 1983 to 1986.<sup>518</sup> The mutual exchange should have been stimulated by infrastructure projects such as the completion of the railway connecting Ürümqi in Xinjiang and Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan. The railway was inaugurated in 1991 thanks to a loan provided by Moscow. Concurrently, the number of Chinese labourers employed in the Soviet Union was increasing and both countries concluded a number of agreements on cooperation in a wide array of areas.<sup>519</sup> In 1987, Moscow recognised that the main river channel was a boundary along the Amur and Ussuri rivers and a year later both sides agreed on the settlement of a large part of the eastern border and could turn to the western section.<sup>520</sup>

#### 4.5 Rivals in reforms

The Sino-Soviet relations were evolving against the background of the construction of socialism, which were undergoing different phases and were shaped by different discourses. While Moscow lambasted Maoist leftism at first, later it started to criticise the rightist turn under Deng's leadership and eventually it castigated authoritarianism after the suppression of the opposition movement in 1989. These complex interactions and changing perceptions were intertwined with reform processes in both countries in the upshot. Many authors argue that Gorbachev's overall perspective on Dengism with its programme of Four Modernisations was sceptical. However, his position was rather positive in the first years. Negative attitude gradually strengthened after the Soviet leader resorted to the enforcement of radical political reforms. Missing the political dimension of reform in China, Gorbachev criticised an excessive liberalisation in the economic sphere.<sup>521</sup> It can be explained by the adoption of liberal socialist discourse which moved him away from the Chinese reform pattern. According to Radchenko, Gorbachev's eventual attitude towards the Chinese model emerged from the inertia of the Soviet hierarchical conception of the socialist camp with the leading position of the USSR, from the rivalry and political ambitions of

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<sup>517</sup> Dittmer (1992), pp. 82-83.

<sup>518</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 87.

<sup>519</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 103.

<sup>520</sup> Dittmer (1992), p. 78.

<sup>521</sup> Radchenko (2014), pp. 177-178.

the Soviet leader who aspired to be the pioneer of the rejuvenated socialism and a new international order.<sup>522</sup>

In the initial period of Gorbachev's tenure, there was a growing interest in Chinese experience together with an increasing number of positive references among political leaders, officials, and experts. These were increasingly often based upon immediate contact with the Chinese realities. The country was visited by Georgii Arbatov, Gorbachev's economic advisor Abel Aganbegian, Oleg Bogomolov as well as a delegation from the Supreme Soviet. Positive assessments were conveyed to the leaders by the ambassador to Beijing Oleg Troianovskii and Fedor Burlatskii.<sup>523</sup> The latter paid a visit to the Asian country and brought valuable materials about the reforms including a film about special economic zones which had been made illegally. In mid-1985, he proposed the establishment of a council for economic and political reforms to Gorbachev, recommending to draw lessons from China, start from agriculture and introduce a household responsibility system before the implementation of private farming.<sup>524</sup> Egor Ligachev as a man number two of the Soviet leadership did not hesitate to praise the agricultural reform with its land leases.<sup>525</sup> This opinion was at least partially shared by Gorbachev himself.<sup>526</sup> The change of wind affected the anti-China lobby in the state and party apparatus. Secretary Konstantin Rusakov, who was responsible for the relations with the socialist countries, Rusakov's deputy Oleg Rakhmanin, as well as deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa were dismissed by the mid-1980s.<sup>527</sup>

Gorbachev believed that China had always been a big issue for the Soviet Union in both positive and negative terms and defined the Soviet strategic task of bringing the Asian country closer to the socialist commonwealth while preventing Beijing from continuing the rapprochement with the West.<sup>528</sup> Even though Moscow did not expect integration between China and other socialist countries, accelerating relations were to be instrumental in reducing Western influence on Beijing.<sup>529</sup> At a Politburo meeting in July 1987, he suggested Deng's collected works to be

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<sup>522</sup> Radchenko (2014), pp. 179, 307.

<sup>523</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 50-51; Hough (1997), pp. 136-137.

<sup>524</sup> Burlatskii (1996), pp. 201, 300.

<sup>525</sup> Hough (1997), p. 98.

<sup>526</sup> Gorbachev (2009d), p. 407.

<sup>527</sup> Lukin (1991), p. 120. Rakhmanin's dismissal, nevertheless, did not come immediately. Cherniaev recalls a case with Rakhmanin's article in *Pravda*, published in mid-1985, which was very critical of Hungary and East Germany and their "needless reforms". Despite an international impact of the article breaching the official political line, Gorbachev limited himself to a warning (Cherniaev, 1993, pp. 50-51).

<sup>528</sup> Gorbachev (2008f), p. 458.

<sup>529</sup> Gorbachev (2008g), p. 59.

published, arguing that public interest in China had to be further stimulated.<sup>530</sup> Final breakthrough was made in 1988 when the Soviet military initiated its withdrawal from Afghanistan and Hanoi announced that the Vietnamese troops would be withdrawn from Cambodia by the end of 1990. Moscow was also decreasing its troops along the Sino-Soviet border.<sup>531</sup> Both sides, therefore, started to prepare the summit to normalise bilateral relations. It finally occurred in May 1989.

The general secretary's official visit to Beijing was preceded by a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in Soviet capital in December 1988. The Soviet representative highlighted the global significance of reforms in both countries and reiterated that Moscow was supportive of China's modernisation. According to Gorbachev, there were no limits in the prospects of mutual cooperation and both sides should have helped each other with reforms.<sup>532</sup> The normalisation occurred during Gorbachev's visit to Beijing on May 15–18, 1989. Lukin asserts that this event marked one of the heights of his tenure as it was perceived positively by an overwhelming majority of both society and elites—in contrast to the turn to the West that provoked controversy and resistance throughout different social strata.<sup>533</sup> Similarly, Brutents considers normalisation one of the most important achievements of Gorbachev's foreign policy.<sup>534</sup> Shevardnadze confesses that he was eager to normalise the Sino-Soviet relations, adding that his generation was disappointed by the split.<sup>535</sup> Iakovlev, in turn, acknowledged the role of restoring relations with the CPC which was important for the international labour movement as a whole.<sup>536</sup>

Paradoxically, numerous Soviet delegations arrived at a time when the country was amidst a wave of protests and turmoil. Evgenii Primakov even called the developments in Chinese cities a revolution, casting doubt upon the cooperation with Beijing.<sup>537</sup> The political section of Gorbachev's delegation was comprised of Eduard Shevardnadze, Aleksandr Iakovlev, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers Iurii Masliukov and Minister of Health Evgenii Chazov. Gorbachev's meetings with President Yang Shangkun, Premier Li Peng, General

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<sup>530</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 215.

<sup>531</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 102.

<sup>532</sup> Gorbachev (2009e), pp. 482-484.

<sup>533</sup> Lukin (1991), p. 121.

<sup>534</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 145.

<sup>535</sup> Shevardnadze (1991), p. 159.

<sup>536</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), p. 617.

<sup>537</sup> Zuenko (2021), p. 100.

Secretary Zhao Ziyang and Deng Xiaoping were the most important moments of the visit. During the talks with Yang, the Soviet leader appreciated China's reform and modernisation and presented a vision of bilateral relations based on a formula of "three yes": (1) yes to respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, win-win cooperation and peaceful coexistence; (2) yes to economic and cultural cooperation as well as to a multilayered political dialogue; (3) yes to coordination on the solution of international affairs. Yang stressed the goals of modernisation, peace, anti-hegemonism, and independent foreign policy while highlighting the importance of the agreement on seeking a "relationship of a new type based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence" where these principles represent a universal norm of interstate relations. Furthermore, the president defined the establishment of a "new international political order based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence" as the main task of the international community including the USSR and PRC.<sup>538</sup> It is worth noting that while Yang addressed mostly the Chinese affairs and reforms, Gorbachev focused rather on international problems and the global role of perestroika.

During the meeting with Li, both politicians agreed that a peaceful external environment was needed for a successful internal development. Even though the normalisation would not mean a return to the alliance of the 1950s, both sides declared their preparedness to expand cooperation in different fields and at different levels, including the reduction of troops along the border which was a neuralgic issue in bilateral relations.<sup>539</sup> The interparty relations were discussed with Zhao. These were to be grounded in equality, respect, non-interference, no pretention to binding truth, mutual exchange, consultation, and coordination. Gorbachev and Zhao, nevertheless, addressed the reform process as well and agreed that comprehensive reforms represented the only way to rejuvenate socialism.<sup>540</sup> The Soviet leader was shocked by Zhao's openness and frankness and appreciated the Chinese representative's adherence to the idea of political reform and multipartism.<sup>541</sup> Zhao's talks with Gorbachev made Deng angry because the general secretary commented on intraparty issues including the actual role of individual actors. Zhao told Gorbachev that the first fiddle was played by Deng, and even though the former reportedly wanted to raise Deng's authority before the Soviet counterpart, such statements did not meet understanding among the Chinese leaders.<sup>542</sup> Gorbachev would later confide to the Indian Prime

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<sup>538</sup> *Vizit General'nogo sekretaria* (1989), pp. 9-14.

<sup>539</sup> *Vizit General'nogo sekretaria* (1989), pp. 18-19.

<sup>540</sup> *Vizit General'nogo sekretaria* (1989), p. 21.

<sup>541</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), pp. 444-445.

<sup>542</sup> Galenovich (2012), pp. 149, 156.

Minister Rajiv Gandhi that Zhao wanted to make Deng responsible for any problems in the country.<sup>543</sup>

Although Deng held a lower position compared to Yang, Li and Zhao, being the chairman of the Central Military Commission, his informal authority frequently exceeded the role of president, premier, and general secretary. In this regard, Gorbachev's meeting with Deng was crucial for the crowning of normalisation. Gorbachev did not dispute with Deng and focused on positive moments instead.<sup>544</sup> Deng's speech during the meeting with Gorbachev summarised the most important points of China's long-term position in relation to Moscow—Russian expansionism, inequality between the two socialist countries and security concerns. Deng gave up any territorial claims and both leaders acknowledged their past mistakes and joint responsibility for the disputes and conflicts. In the wording of the joint communiqué, the meeting ended the past and opened up the future.<sup>545</sup> Gorbachev recalls that Deng put a particularly strong emphasis on the legitimacy and existence of different roads to socialism and different models of socialism as well as on Moscow-driven inequalities in bilateral relations as the principal cause of all problems. The Soviet leader did not oppose his counterpart's position.<sup>546</sup>

At an event organised by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, and China Institute of International Studies after meetings with the highest political representatives, Gorbachev expressed satisfaction with the results of his visit and made several remarks about perestroika and Chinese reforms. According to Gorbachev, the Soviet side sympathised with China's efforts to overcome closeness and "semicolonial backwardness" through the modernisation programme while drawing a parallel with the Soviet "revolutionary perestroika" whose objective was to overcome the former "command-bureaucratic system".<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), p. 261.

<sup>544</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 373.

<sup>545</sup> Vámos (2010), pp. 95-96. Chinese perspective on the Sino-Soviet relations can be demonstrated on Hu Yaobang's remarks from November 1982. They show that the Chinese reforms leaders perceived the Stalin and Khrushchev period alike in an ambiguous and critical way, not to speak about the Brezhnevite period: "The Soviet Communist Party interfered in our internal affairs and did not even want to let us have a revolution. Stalin did not approve of our war of liberation after the war against Japan. He wanted us to cooperate with the Guomindang, saying that a breakdown in relations between the Communist Party and China would lead to the destruction of the Chinese nation. Comrade Mao Zedong and our Party rejected this advice, and as a result, our revolution won. Stalin later made a self-criticism, which we agreed with. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Stalin did help us a lot and made an important contribution to the foundation of our heavy industry. After Stalin's death, Khrushchev again tried to dictate to us, not only in terms of inter-party relations but also in terms of state-to-state relations" (*Excerpts of Talks*, 1982b).

<sup>546</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), pp. 437-439.

<sup>547</sup> Vizit General'nogo sekretaria (1989), pp. 23, 29.

It is not without interest that the CPSU general secretary presented his perspective on the evolution of the Soviet reformism since 1985 to the Chinese audience whereby he wanted to convince them about the necessity of the political reform and rightness of the current political course. Gorbachev divided the reform process into four phases: (1) strengthening the discipline first; (2) eliminating the alienation of workers from property through the transformation of state enterprises, the introduction of self-management and *khozraschet*, the development of cooperatives and expansion of material and financial (“commodity-money”) mechanisms; (3) devolving powers from the centre to regional level and soviets and concurrent implementation of the merit principle in remuneration in line with the socialist principle “according to work”; (4) conducting a radical reform of the political system with the concept of “socialist rule of law” in the centre. In this context, Gorbachev reiterated that the Communist Party remained to be the ruling political subject and assured the audience of allegiance to the “socialist choice” made in October 1917. Such an interpretation indicates that the Soviet leader did not want to lose understanding and support from the Chinese while advocating a liberal socialist conception of reform in contrast to the reform mainstream in the Asian country, which was closer to neo-Leninism.

Despite differing perspectives on the reforms, historians emphasise the fact that both socialist powers were able to declare with one voice that there were multiple models of socialism with the same legitimacy and claimed allegiance to the policy of anti-hegemonism.<sup>548</sup> Yet normalisation and reconciliation occurred when the paths of both countries were about to split up again. Gorbachev’s policies were not shaped by neo-Leninist discourse any longer while Beijing was deepening such a course. Iurii Tavrovskii, an official from the Ideology Department of the Central Committee co-responsible for the organisation of the May visit, revealed that face to face with the social unrest he witnessed in the Chinese capital did Gorbachev categorically reject the possibility of following the Chinese path. Upon his return to Moscow, the general secretary communicated to the allied Communist parties that the Chinese path was erroneous, unacceptable, and dangerous.<sup>549</sup> The decision to suppress the opposition by military means only confirmed Gorbachev’s conviction that political reform had to go first.<sup>550</sup> High-level MFA official Vladimir Lukin concluded that the post-Tiananmen development changed the politico-ideological background of bilateral relations in a negative way, which corresponded with China’s

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<sup>548</sup> Shen (2020), p. 385; Wishnick (2014), pp. 104-105.

<sup>549</sup> Medvedev (2011), pp. 98-99.

<sup>550</sup> Falin (1999a), p. 437; Gorbachev (2010b), p. 262.

stronger orientation to “conservative” socialist countries such as Cuba, East Germany, North Korea and Romania. Lukin predicted internal political and social instability in the Asian country and appealed to the Soviet leadership for being cautious about party-to-party and military cooperation because these could be politically counterproductive.<sup>551</sup>

Even though the official Soviet reaction to the events at Tiananmen Square was moderate, Gorbachev started to criticise Beijing’s actions implicitly and in private.<sup>552</sup> Troianovskii recollects that the Soviet embassy supported the official position describing the events as an internal affair.<sup>553</sup> The Soviet leader talked about the need for a balanced attitude towards China entailing a constructive public position. It was based on the argumentation that the suppression of opposition was China’s internal affair but a concurrent appeal, according to which repressive measures would not solve the problems themselves.<sup>554</sup> Regretting the Tiananmen events and calling for political dialogue, Gorbachev emphasised the interest in deepening bilateral cooperation at the same time.<sup>555</sup> The developments in the Asian country contributed to further polarisation of the political debate in the USSR. The radical camp publicly condemned the Chinese authorities, whereas the opposite pole, inclusive of Vice President Genadii Ianaev or Gorbachev’s chief of staff Valerii Boldin, was supportive of the actions of the Chinese Communists.<sup>556</sup> The Tiananmen thus brought about a turn in the perception of China among the Soviet elite. While the country and Deng’s reforms were an object of interest and inspiration for those who are usually called reformers, after the suppression of the Chinese opposition, the country became a positive reference point mostly for “conservatives” (despite the fact that a majority of the “conservatives” were reformers as well).

The post-Tiananmen development in China herself entailed a reassessment of the Soviet reform process. Negative perceptions were further deepened in connection with the disintegration of the Soviet bloc in the CEE region. Premier Li Peng openly declared at the 7th CPC Congress in March 1989 that China would not follow the Soviet path.<sup>557</sup> Beijing was increasingly concerned over the reform course in the USSR, especially the excessive democratisation, and glasnost'.<sup>558</sup> Deng was

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<sup>551</sup> Note by Vladimir Lukin (1989).

<sup>552</sup> Lukin (1991), pp. 123-124.

<sup>553</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 377.

<sup>554</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), p. 262.

<sup>555</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), p. 404.

<sup>556</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 155.

<sup>557</sup> Marsh (2005), p. 104.

<sup>558</sup> Gorbachev (2011b), p. 474.

afraid that the Soviet radicalism could spread to the country and fuel instability, disunity in the CPC and public discontent given the galloping inflation and a number of negative side-effects of the economic reforms.<sup>559</sup> The leadership's concerns were accompanied by a change in media discourse on the events in the Soviet Union. While informing moderately about the adjustments prior to 1987 and mostly positively over the next two years, since 1989, the media identified Gorbachev's perestroika with "bourgeois liberalisation".<sup>560</sup> In September that year Deng stated that chaos in the USSR was unavoidable.<sup>561</sup> By the beginning of 1990 the Chinese leaders resorted to public criticism of Gorbachev's policies after expressing concerns in private.<sup>562</sup> Ambassador Troianovskii thinks back to his conversation with Premier Li Peng who told him in 1989: "Comrade Gorbachev's opinions are changing so quickly that we are not managing to observe them."<sup>563</sup>

Ideological differences started to deepen again as manifested by frequent critical remarks on the primacy of panhuman interests over class and national ones.<sup>564</sup> When Premier Li Peng visited the Soviet Union in April 1990, Gorbachev told him that the country would not follow any foreign development patterns, be they from China, Poland or Sweden, reiterating that the economic reforms had failed because of the existence of the old political system.<sup>565</sup> An extensive and critical interpretation was conveyed to the Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti three months later. Gorbachev argued that the Chinese Communists were restoring "Maoist model", based on state regulation and centralisation, under the leadership of bureaucrats who capitalised on "conservatism of the working class". This neo-Stalinist-like interpretation was accompanied by scepticism for China's transition to a market economy due to limited resources and underdeveloped material and technological basis. Finally, Gorbachev insisted on the need for political reforms and glasnost' in order to eliminate the "command-bureaucratic system".<sup>566</sup> Overall, Gorbachev concluded by that time that Chinese reforms were positive at first but as the reform was deepening, the vested interests of conservative groups were endangered, which provoked them to initiate retrograde move.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Zubok (2017), pp. 130-131.

<sup>560</sup> Zuenko (2015), p. 67.

<sup>561</sup> Medvedev (2011), p. 100.

<sup>562</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 115.

<sup>563</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 379.

<sup>564</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 292.

<sup>565</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), pp. 451-452; Gorbachev (2011b), p. 297.

<sup>566</sup> Brutents (2005), pp. 227-229; Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 77. Gorbachev (2012), pp. 341-344.

<sup>567</sup> Gorbachev (2012), p. 323.

The ideological divergence, nevertheless, did not undermine state-to-state relations. The acceptance of the principle of peaceful coexistence created a fertile soil for the development of bilateral cooperation irrespective of different internal reform models. Only between June and December 1989, more than 100 delegations at the ministerial or higher level were exchanged between both countries. During the Gorbachev–Peng meeting in Moscow in 1990, both leaders agreed on non-interference in each other’s affairs, the crucial significance of normal Sino-Soviet relations, and the tactics of low-profile propaganda of mutual cooperation. The Chinese side expressed interest in the more active development of economic and party-to-party relations.<sup>568</sup> Li Peng signed a programme of economic and scientific cooperation, agreements on loans, trade, joint construction of a nuclear power plant in China and many other documents.<sup>569</sup> Given the worsening economic situation in the Soviet Union, Moscow asked Beijing for “commodity loans” including grain, meat, peanuts, tea, silk, tobacco, cigarettes, textiles or light industrial products and finally foreign currency worth 500 million Swiss francs in 1990 and further one billion francs in the following year.<sup>570</sup>

The cooperation intensified in 1991 despite an interannual decrease from \$5.2 billion to \$3.8 billion in mutual trade. Moscow provided Beijing with military equipment inclusive of SU-27 combat aircraft.<sup>571</sup> General Secretary Jiang Zemin arrived in Moscow in May to conclude a joint declaration on cooperation and move the talks on the border issue forward.<sup>572</sup> Gorbachev declared on that occasion that both countries shared the principal task of modernising their countries based on *global* experience, national values, cultural peculiarities and interests of the people. He shared his insight that the revival of socialism had to be revolutionary in essence and evolutionary in practice, while social and political stability being crucial for reform.<sup>573</sup> At the same time, Minister of Defence Dmitrii Iazov visited the Chinese capital and proposed a plan of Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>574</sup> Kriuchkov, however, believes that the potential of the bilateral relations was not utilised. He argues that both Gorbachev and Pavlov made a mistake that they overlooked this

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<sup>568</sup> Gorbachev (2011b), pp. 474.

<sup>569</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 291.

<sup>570</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 182.

<sup>571</sup> Wishnick (2014), pp. 116-117.

<sup>572</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 293.

<sup>573</sup> Gorbachev (2015b), pp. 48-49.

<sup>574</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 184.

vector despite a variety of economic, geopolitical, ideological, political, as well as security reasons for it.<sup>575</sup>

Even though Beijing cooperated with Gorbachev who was more acceptable than populist radicals from Russia or Supreme Soviet, the Chinese side was alarmed by the deepening chaos and crisis in the adjacent country. It is beyond any doubt that at least some of the Chinese leaders sympathised with the August coup d'état. Historians even assert that Beijing could have known about the plans in advance while some archival materials indicate that GKChP representatives planned “strategic rapprochement” with China as a pillar of Soviet foreign policy strategy. Several days prior to the coup, Iazov hosted a Chinese military delegation headed by Chief of Staff Chi Haotian. Both Chi's Soviet counterpart Mikhail Moiseev and the minister of defence appreciated suppression of the opposition movement in China.<sup>576</sup> It is not excluded that the military officials might have discussed different scenarios of how to restore law and order in the Soviet Union. Many members of the State Committee on the State of Emergency (GKChP) were inspired by China and the State Committee's head Ianaev met Chinese ambassador Yu Hongliang during the coup and the latter allegedly expressed his support for the actions taken by the GKChP.<sup>577</sup>

Officially, Beijing kept neutrality and restraint. The failure of the coup was, nevertheless, assessed negatively within the CPC. Deng was afraid of the isolation of China and other negative impacts which could have been brought by the disintegration of the USSR and abandonment of socialism.<sup>578</sup> The failure of the August attempt to reinvigorate socialism and push through the neo-Leninist discourse coinciding with the Chinese reform pattern made clear that the relations between both countries were about to enter a new era. The new beginning was symbolised by the December delegation of the Russian parliament led by Vladimir Lukin who was Boris El'tsin's close associate. Despite El'tsin's furious attacks on the Chinese Communists, he decided to send Lukin to Beijing to assure the Chinese side that the new leaders were interested in developing bilateral relations.<sup>579</sup> The foundations of Sino-Russian cooperation in the

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<sup>575</sup> Kriuchkov (1996), p. 96.

<sup>576</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 185; *Report by S. Goncharov* (1991).

<sup>577</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 294.

<sup>578</sup> Zuenko (2021), p. 102.

<sup>579</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 289. Interestingly, communication between the Chinese ambassador to Moscow and the Soviet MFA from 1990 shows that some Soviet and Russian representatives unofficially asked the Chinese diplomats to invite El'tsin to an official visit to China. It indicates efforts to develop political bilateral relations with Beijing independent on the Soviet Union. The Chinese side, nevertheless, turned such initiatives down. The ambassador ordered the diplomats not to react in any way and he suggested that Gorbachev solved the question in order not to undermine the position of central authorities and Gorbachev himself. In February 1991, Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh turned to the general secretary to take

diametrically changed environment were thus laid right before the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself.

#### 4.6 Soviet perspectives on China

Relations between both countries as well as the interpretation of China's development inclusive of reforms were strongly influenced by the image of the country in individual Soviet discourses and collective memory. In the prerevolutionary epoch, the image was shaped by the dualist Enlightenment perspective distinguishing between the progressive and superior West and stagnant and inferior East.<sup>580</sup> Such a discourse was rejected by the Slavophiles and interwar Eurasianists but it remained present in Russian Marxism which spilt over to the secondary role of China in contrast to the priority of the Western vector both in Soviet thought and foreign policy. The victory of Bolshevism in Russia after 1917 situated the country at the centre of the ICM and the world revolutionary process, leaving China only a minor, however important, position. The traditional Soviet vision of the socialist world as a hierarchically structured community was combined with ideological orthodoxy, which affected Soviet perception of China and distorted her image.

Gilbert Rozman was among the first Western scholars who noted that Soviet criticism of China during the ideological polemics after the split resembled Western criticism of the USSR.<sup>581</sup> Soviet debates on China indirectly reflected internal polemics about socialism and enabled an implicit criticism of the Soviet system and the hegemonic discourse itself. Iurii Andropov, who headed the Liaison Department between 1957 and 1967, was very active in this regard and gathered a group of consultants to critically analyse Maoism.<sup>582</sup> Andropov emphasised the research into China and proactivity in the grand polemic with Maoism. Bovin recalls that at first Andropov tended to have a very critical and negative stance on Maoist China under the influence of such leading Sinologists as Rakhmanin.<sup>583</sup> Rozman summarises the anti-Communist criticism of the Soviet model in 11 points: totalitarianism, dictatorship of a minority, forced collectivism and suppression of individuality, militarism, cult of personality with the dominance of an unchecked leader, bureaucratism hampering economic productivity, exploitation of the population and the lack of material incentives, forced industrialisation with the absence of market mechanisms,

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due steps, proposing that El'tsin be invited by provincial bodies. No such visit eventually happened (*Pis'mo M. S. Gorbachevu*, 1990; 1991).

<sup>580</sup> Lukin (1999), p. 6.

<sup>581</sup> Rozman (1985), p. ix.

<sup>582</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), pp. 104-105.

<sup>583</sup> Bovin (2003), p. 248.

discrimination against national and ethnic minorities, unscientific character of the ruling ideology and political interference in science.<sup>584</sup> It goes on saying that these arguments appear in the Soviet criticism of China except for totalitarianism.

Since the late 1960s until the early 1980s, there was a wide consensus in the assessment of China's development among the Soviet experts and officials. A comprehensive analysis of the hegemonic discourse on China was carried out by Rozman, who draws upon an extensive amount of Soviet literature. I consider it useful to briefly present his observations and conclusions, for these help us to understand the background of official policies. Soviet authors were critical of Mao's emphasis on peasantry and agrarian reform of the 1950s. The agrarian reform, which eventually resulted in global collectivisation and the establishment of communes, allegedly did not correspond with the level of development, was excessively egalitarianist and eliminated market mechanisms prematurely. Chinese peasants were considered exploited and the village was seen as a mere source of financial means for military-industrial complex. From the Soviet perspective, the CPC under Mao's leadership failed to serve the interests of the working class and undervalued the role of the proletariat in the construction of socialism. Some authors (such as Vladimir Lazarev), therefore, did not hesitate to interpret the Maoist China in terms of a petty-bourgeois counterrevolution and the rule of a military-bureaucratic dictatorship. The CPC was accused of the underestimation of the significance of class relations, absence of a scientific understanding of socioeconomic development, voluntarism, poor management, terror against rank-and-file members as well as leaders and finally a lack of democracy. The Soviets negatively assessed the militarisation of Chinese society, including the wide role of the PLA in social and economic processes. Paradoxically, the gap between the military and civilian economy with the overemphasis on the former to the detriment of the latter was frequently addressed. At the same time, the Soviet authors had little understanding of the CPC's constructive relations with the patriotic bourgeoisie, which weakened a rigorous class attitude. They also tended to lambast China's nationality policies for alleged Great Han chauvinism, xenophobia, nationalism, Sinicisation, and oppression of national minorities, especially the Uyghurs and Tibetians. This cursory survey shows a considerable overlap between the Soviet perceptions of China and the anti-Soviet narratives in the West indeed.

Lukin is attentive to the Orientalist bias present in the Soviet literature on China and a strong influence of Marx's concept of Asiatic mode of production, which helped the authors to interpret

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<sup>584</sup> Rozman (1985), pp. 19-20.

Maoism as a new form of Oriental despotism and traditional imperial patterns based upon Confucianism.<sup>585</sup> One of the most illustrative examples are the works of historian Leonid Vasil'ev. This line of reasoning had parallels among exile as well as Western academicians (Nikolai Berdiaev, Richard Pipes) who frequently analysed the Soviet model against the background of Russian prerevolutionary traditions.<sup>586</sup> The Soviet China studies were lacking a firm institutional basis, conceptual framework and systematic coordination with the state policies for a long time. It started to change in the second half of the 1960s in connection with the revision of the state China policy from the reactive to the proactive one. An important contribution to the Soviet debate on China was made by Otto Kuusinen, a Politburo member and one of the editors of the *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*, which was the magisterial textbook of Soviet ideology.<sup>587</sup> At the plenum of the Central Committee in February 1964, he described the Chinese model as Mao's dictatorship in contrast to the dictatorship of proletariat or people.<sup>588</sup> In 1966 the Institute of the Far East was set up at the Soviet Academy of Sciences to provide the leadership with expertise on China.<sup>589</sup>

In the 1970s, the field became dominated by the big quartet—Mikhail Kapitsa, Oleg Rakhmanin, Mikhail Sladkovskii, and Sergei Tikhvinskii. Kapitsa was appointed director of the Far Eastern Department at the MFA (1970–1982) and subsequently deputy foreign minister (1982–1987). Rakhmanin served as the first deputy director of the International Liaison Department of the CPSU Central Committee between 1968 and 1987, while Sladkovskii headed the Institute of the Far East since 1966 up until 1985. Tikhvinskii, in turn, was an influential scholar at the Academy of Sciences and became rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Soviet MFA which trained professional diplomats (1980–1986). “During the final six years of the Brezhnev era, this quartet produced over 200 articles and books, providing unerring semiofficial guidance to Soviet sinologists regarding the party line.”<sup>590</sup> According to Lukin, the actual leader of this dominant group was Rakhmanin who had connections among the military-industrial complex and assisted in promotion of its interests which were based on maintaining the image of China as a principal threat to the national security.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> Lukin (2003), pp. 133-134.

<sup>586</sup> Lukin (2011), p. 6.

<sup>587</sup> Kuusinen (1962).

<sup>588</sup> Arbatov (2002), pp. 98-99.

<sup>589</sup> Wolff (2003), p. 442.

<sup>590</sup> Wolff (2003), pp. 446-447.

<sup>591</sup> Lukin (2003), p. 144.

Rakhmanin had direct experience with China, since he worked at the Soviet embassy in Beijing, being an interpreter during the meetings between Khrushchev and Mao.<sup>592</sup> I have already mentioned Rakhmanin's central role in the Interkit as well as his assertive behaviour towards Brezhnev, Honecker and other political leaders. The picture can be supplemented with a case of falsifying documents to fit Rakhmanin's interests. Wishnick discovered that his department argued that China had territorial pretensions to the USSR. For no evidence existed, Rakhmanin's group did not hesitate to falsify the original Chinese documents.<sup>593</sup> One, therefore, can hardly be surprised that Rakhmanin, Kapitsa as well as other hardliners did not change their stance on China after Mao's death insisting on reform and opening up being a mere disguised Maoism.<sup>594</sup> Rakhmanin and his group thwarted any serious attempts to shed new light on the developments in China and succeeded in promoting the idea that the leftist Maoism turned into a rightist Maoism, hence no substantial change was underway.<sup>595</sup>

Initially, this interpretation remained dominant also at the foreign ministry, which evaluated post-Mao reforms as a preparation for a war.<sup>596</sup> A critical attitude towards China's foreign policy, including multilayered cooperation with the U.S. and insistence on forming an anti-Soviet international front, was accompanied by censure of the reform and opening up. In this line of reasoning, neo-Stalinists defined the post-Mao foreign policy's priorities as follows: (1) political and ideological confrontation with the USSR; (2) diversion against socialist countries through provocations and selective cooperation; (3) cooperation with imperialism against détente, USSR and world socialism; (4) efforts to make the Third World its sphere of influence against USSR; (5) attempts to provoke conflicts, preparations for war and the thesis of inevitability of world war; and (6) strengthening policies against unity of the ICM.<sup>597</sup> This perspective merged with alarmist statements about China's alleged claims to the territory of almost entire Asia and large part of Europe following the heritage of Mongol raids in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (sic!).<sup>598</sup> By the same token, the Chinese reforms were interpreted as a gradual restoration of capitalism while the political system was described as "military-bureaucratic dictatorship".<sup>599</sup> Rakhmanin argued that positive development could be brought about only through departure from Maoism and

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<sup>592</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 142.

<sup>593</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 100.

<sup>594</sup> Miller (2016), p. 34.

<sup>595</sup> Bovin (2003), p. 274.

<sup>596</sup> Miller (2015), pp. 199-200.

<sup>597</sup> Borisov (1982), pp. 266-267.

<sup>598</sup> Kapitsa (1979), p. 385.

<sup>599</sup> Borisov (1982), pp. 23-24; Kapitsa (1979), p. 321.

great-power hegemonism paired with a return to pre-1958 policies based on Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism.<sup>600</sup> It shows that neo-Stalinist discourse was extremely biased and one-sided in its interpretation of China and considered the relationship in the 1950s the only positive reference point. Obviously, such a perspective facilitated neither the normalisation of bilateral relations nor an unbiased assessment of China's reform model.

In the Brezhnevite period, China was a frequent reference point for Soviet leaders. China-related issues were addressed by the supreme leader and foreign minister as well as prime ministers, Politburo members, and high-ranking officials of the party secretariat. No congress of the Communist Party got by without adopting a binding position on China. All those statements were very homogeneous in both content and form. The general approach to the Asian country was typical of certain ambiguity. Socialist revolution in China was perceived as one of the crucial moments in the struggle of the international working class for Communism.<sup>601</sup> This positive evaluation was in stark contrast to a negative perspective on the developments after the 8<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress. Neo-Stalinist discourse distinguished three stages of PRC's evolution: alliance with socialist countries, collaboration with imperialism, and aggression against socialist countries. Another three-stage development included a struggle for leadership in the ICM, a struggle for dismantling the ICM together with leftist anti-imperialism, and, eventually, alignment with imperialism. Both characterisations were to show Beijing's alleged aspiration to become a world superpower and, at the same time, its class and moral degradation.<sup>602</sup>

The prominent Soviet diplomat and MFA's official Kapitsa, who was appointed a deputy foreign minister, interpreted the former ally as follows: "The logic of class betrayal led the Chinese leadership from a leftist, pseudo-revolutionary extremism to a direct politico-military alignment with world imperialism and to a transformation of Beijing's ideology and policies into a kind of bourgeois anti-Communism."<sup>603</sup> Brezhnevite leaders were convinced that China's policies harmed the interests of socialist commonwealth and world socialism as a whole, argued that Beijing undermined détente and attempted to provoke world war and castigated the CPC for collaboration with the "most reactionary forces of international imperialism". This harsh attitude coincided with a complete rejection of Maoism and a policy commitment to fight it at the international level. Maoism was described as an anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, anti-Soviet,

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<sup>600</sup> Borisov (1982), p. 38.

<sup>601</sup> *Programma* (1961), p. 3.

<sup>602</sup> Kapitsa (1979), pp. 3-5.

<sup>603</sup> Kapitsa (1979), p. 5.

reactionary, nationalist, chauvinist ideology that was incompatible with socialism. It is worth noticing that the Soviet Communists tended to present themselves as defenders of the Chinese people and socialism in the Asian country against Maoists.<sup>604</sup> Brezhnev drew a parallel between capitalist powers' interwar strategy of setting Germany against the USSR and their China policy which was perceived as a tactic aimed at setting the Asian country against the Soviets.<sup>605</sup>

Nevertheless, there was an alternative stream coexistent with the neo-Stalinist discourse. It was represented by several prominent scholars of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, such as director of the influential Institute of the U.S. and Canada Georgii Arbatov, Director of the Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System Oleg Bogomolov, head of China department of the Institute of the World Labour Movement Vilia Gel'bras, director of China department at the Institute of Oriental Studies Lev Deliusin and academician Fedor Burlatskii who also headed the department of Marxism-Leninism at the Institute of Social Sciences of the CPSU Central Committee.<sup>606</sup> The latter published a pioneering article in *Novyi mir* in 1978, calling for a new Soviet policy on China. The fact that the text was allowed to be published indicates that the hegemony of the "big quartet" was increasingly challenged from within.<sup>607</sup> In the last years of Brezhnev's rule, the anti-Chinese discourse was weakening both at the political and expert levels. Voices in favour of rapprochement and China's reforms were more and more audible.<sup>608</sup> The general secretary's aide and speechwriter Bovin sent a memorandum on China to Andropov in 1979 in which he emphasised positive changes in the Asian country and argued that the internal reform course would be able to have positive effects on Beijing's foreign policy. At the same time, Bovin criticised Soviet attacks against and disdain for China's internal political and ideological debates because such attitudes damaged the image of the USSR and helped "conservative" forces.<sup>609</sup> Later on, the author praised the Chinese reforms, considering them a possible milestone in world history.<sup>610</sup>

Interest in the Asian country became popular during the 1980s. *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka (Far Eastern Affairs)*, the leading Soviet scholarly journal on China, opened a monthly section on the Chinese economic policy in 1985. In the same year, the CPSU Central Committee established a

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<sup>604</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 268; Borisov (1982), pp. 3-5; Brezhnev (1981), p. 59; Kirilenko (1980), p. 587; Suslov (1982), p. 22; Tikhonov (1985), p. 197.

<sup>605</sup> Brezhnev (1979), pp. 589-590.

<sup>606</sup> Lukin (2003), pp. 47-48.

<sup>607</sup> Miller (2016), p. 38.

<sup>608</sup> Rozman (1985), p. 265.

<sup>609</sup> Bovin (2003), pp. 393-395.

<sup>610</sup> Bovin (2003), pp. 452.

special department to research the country's reforms.<sup>611</sup> Soviet reform-minded authors argued that the Chinese Communists were overcoming the deviations of Maoism and reviving socialism. Burlatskii compared the reforms to Lenin's NEP and believed that the proclaimed allegiance to Maoism was only façade.<sup>612</sup> Wishnick concludes that the mainstream position among the Soviet experts since the mid-1980s was that China's mixed economy was compatible with socialism.<sup>613</sup> Some of the scholars—Director of the Institute of the Far East Mikhail Titarenko, diplomat and consultant at the International Liaison Department of the CPSU Central Committee Boris Kulik or Anatolii Butenko from the Institute of Economics of the World Socialist System—even called for the implementation of the Chinese model.<sup>614</sup> Miller argues that by the mid-1980s a large part of the Soviet intelligentsia believed that the Chinese path was viable and the USSR might have drawn positive lessons from China. Based on the recent archival research, the American historian arrives at a conclusion that the Soviet leaders were familiar with the analyses elaborated by the reputable Soviet institutes and their recommendations regarding the applicability of Chinese experience in the Soviet Union.<sup>615</sup>

The rise of a new academic discourse on China coincided with more moderate changes in the official political rhetoric since the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. Brezhnev, Andropov and some other Politburo members acknowledged in public that “serious internal processes”, “complex developments” and “internal changes” were going on in the adjacent country.<sup>616</sup> The general secretary started to emphasise Moscow's interest in cooperation and improving relations instead of confrontation when addressing China issues in a section dedicated to socialist countries at the 26<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>617</sup> It indicated that the Soviet leadership recognised the existence of socialism in China. These signals intensified shortly before Brezhnev passed away. The Soviet leader declared that the country did not pose any threat to socialist China, had no territorial claims or interest in meddling in her internal affairs, and mutual hostility and alienation were abnormal.<sup>618</sup> The changes and growing tensions in China discourse in the last three years of Brezhnevite period

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<sup>611</sup> Miller (2016), p. 52.

<sup>612</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 42-43.

<sup>613</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 113.

<sup>614</sup> Marsh (2005), pp. 146-148.

<sup>615</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 53, 197.

<sup>616</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 348; Brezhnev (1981), p. 420.

<sup>617</sup> Materialy (1981), pp. 10-11.

<sup>618</sup> Brezhnev (1982), pp. 444-445.

show that the neo-Stalinist narrative was challenged by a counter-discourse and the former was being replaced by a neo-Leninist perspective.

Despite that, the position of neo-Stalinists in the China field remained dominant at that time as memoranda and briefings elaborated by Vladimir Lukin, a head of the East Asian sector at Arbatov's Institute of the U.S. and Canada in 1968–1987, testify.<sup>619</sup> For many years Lukin drafted briefings on China and thus reflected the evolution of a discourse about the Asian power. These documents corroborate that the leaders had access to an interpretation which opposed the hardline course enforced by Rakhmanin and his allies in the apparatus. His briefings also demonstrate the rivalry and power struggles in the highest echelons of the state and party, which told on the China-related agenda. In his material for Arbatov's paper to the leadership from late-1985, Lukin argues that the entire China agenda remains to be monopolised by Rakhmanin's Liaison Department which is controlling both conceptual and personnel issues.<sup>620</sup> Lukin warns that the Chinese side could draw erroneous conclusions about Gorbachev's position, referring to the recent establishment of the separate Institute of Uyghur Studies in Alma-Ata which might strengthen Chinese concerns about the alleged attempts to provoke internal instability in the Chinese regions. He criticises Rakhmanin's positive remarks regarding Lin Bao, who was suspected of subversive actions against Mao and who died in Mongolia when being on the run to the Soviet Union in 1971.

By the same token, the expert recommends being supportive of the expanding cooperation between China and the CEE socialist countries while lambasting the operation of the Interkit used by Rakhmanin in countering the PRC. Lukin goes on to identify concrete cases when both the Liaison Department and Gosplan obstructed the formal agreements concluded between both countries in 1985. Similarly, Gosplan discussed an expert paper about Chinese reform, but the Liaison Department subsequently exerted pressure on the economists concerned to draw negative conclusions, including the assertion that the Chinese reforms entailed the restoration of capitalism in the country. As the authors refused to do so, the material was withdrawn from Gosplan. Lukin asserts that the Department obstructs contacts and exchanges between the Chinese and Soviet organisations and individuals, giving instructions to those who travel to China

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<sup>619</sup> Briefings could have been submitted to the leadership either with a signature of the director of the relevant institute/department or with author's signature but in that case the document had to be accompanied by director's letter (Lukin, 2018, p. 303).

<sup>620</sup> Cherniaev confirms that Rakhmanin controlled all cadres on China in the state and party apparatus, propaganda about China and any policies regarding China. He also opposed and ignored Brezhnev's Tashkent statement on normalisation (Cherniaev, 1995, p. 448).

how to write about their experiences. The briefing is also critical of the operation of the Soviet embassy in Beijing and depicts censorship practices in the China field carried out by the Liaison Department and the related Institute of the Far East at the Academy of Sciences.<sup>621</sup>

In October 1985, Lukin together with Arbatov paid a visit to China, met representatives from different fields, including members of the State Council, academia, enterprises, and farms, and got familiar with the results of reforms. Upon their arrival, they drafted a memorandum which was submitted to the Central Committee. Both scholars concluded that great achievements in agriculture, industry, cultural life, and public discourse had been reached since 1978. From their perspective, the country did not abandon socialism and the economic reform was based on an accelerated industrialisation, scientific and technological revolution, and rural development through FDI and imports of high technologies. They paid attention to the legalisation of the private sector and hired labour, redefinition of central planning along the lines of the plurality of central plans with a focus on strategic industries, introduction of economic stimuli, differentiation in income, expansion of external trade and economic interdependence. Lukin and Arbatov did not avoid negative phenomena such as the rise in crime and corruption but appreciated an active state fight against them.

According to the Soviet experts, the economic situation in the mid-1980s was complicated and complex, but the state and party alike seemingly did not lose control of the reform process. Recommendations for the Soviet political leadership as put forward in this document and other related briefings submitted to the Central Committee in the next months can be summarised as follows: (1) promote a positive perspective on China and her reforms; (2) deepen cooperation with the Chinese counterparts at all levels; (3) accelerate the USSR's pivot to Asia-Pacific and revise the role of the Soviet Far East to be more than a mere source of raw materials for the Western part of the country; (4) drawing lessons from the experience of such strategic port cities as Shanghai and Dalian and start to open Soviet cities, first of all, Vladivostok; (5) establish special economic zones with reference to early Soviet practice of economic concessions; (6) reduce the Soviet military presence in the border regions and Mongolia, for it obstructs confidence-building and helps the anti-Soviet and pro-Western actors in China; (7) develop a pragmatic and balanced relationship.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>621</sup> Lukin (2018), pp. 332-335.

<sup>622</sup> Lukin (2018), pp. 313-321, 336-351.

Such interpretation and recommendations would gradually become a mainstream position in the Soviet Union, replacing the hardline course represented by Rakhmanin. It follows that the political leadership watched the developments in the adjacent country and not a few high-level actors sympathised with Dengism, seeking to implement it in the USSR.

## 4.7 Findings

Since the establishment of the Communist regime in Russia, China was the most important country in the Third World for Moscow and affected both the shape of the Cold War as well as the development of the Soviet Union itself. The first socialist country, in turn, influenced China in many ways. The October Revolution multiplied the potential and influence of Marxism-Leninism all over the world. The Chinese Communist movement adapted the Soviet ideology to domestic conditions. The sinicisation of Marxism led Mao to invent concepts such as new democracy, people's democratic dictatorship, and the intermediate zone. After 1949, the Chinese model underwent several stages ranging from NEP-like Maoism in the early 1950s to the leftist radicalism of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, which had affinities with War Communism and early, revolutionary Stalinism. This stage was eventually replaced by Dengism, reviving many features of both the first years of the People's Republic and the Soviet NEP. Deng's reformism did not bring Westernisation but rather a combination of Leninism (that is, russified Marxism), Confucianism, and Western patterns in contrast to Maoism with its aversion to both Western patterns and Confucianism paired with affinities with Legalism. Russia and the Soviet Union were traditionally closer to the West than China, where Westernism enjoyed only very limited support, for it was discredited due to the historical experience with colonialism and imperialism. In contrast, Soviet elites and intelligentsia were more receptive to Western thinking and attracted by Western socioeconomic model, and many of them desired to make the Soviet Union (and Russia) a European country. These cultural and civilisational differences significantly affected the reform processes in both countries.

The analysis shows that the Soviets were engaged in China since the very beginning. Moscow cultivated relations with Guomindang and the Communist Party alike and actively interfered in the country's internal affairs. Relations between Stalin and Mao and their political parties were far from ideal, and the Communist victory in 1949 was somewhat unexpected for the Soviet leader. It redrew the landscape of the Cold War and changed the established power balance after World War II. Stalin's death and Khrushchev's adventurism, which resembled Mao's mindset and actions in many ways, opened the space for China to seek leadership in the International Communist Movement. Mao's leftist policies were to construct an alternative model of socialism

and surpass the Soviet Union. The split put an end to the alliance which formed the backbone of the unity of socialist world and the ICM. The grand polemic between both countries and intensive competition in the Third World were accompanied by the suspension of party-to-party relations, open hostility, military clashes, and paranoia about a full-scale nuclear war between former allies. Despite some efforts to restore normal relations on the Moscow side, the latter resorted to containment of China through controlling the policies of socialist countries towards the Asian country, cooperating with Washington and trying to establish a system of collective security in Asia. The China factor became inherent to the Soviet-American relationship. Paradoxically, the ground-breaking rapprochement between Beijing and Washington accelerated the relations between the Soviet and American sides. Unlike the Soviet Union, China began her integration into Western economic structures.

The launch of reforms in 1978 gave a new impetus to this process, as the new Chinese leaders concluded that the construction of socialism was hardly possible amid the economic impotence produced by Mao's leftism. In the 1970s, Brezhnev called for normalisation, proposed a non-aggression treaty, and even admitted the adoption of the principles of peaceful coexistence in bilateral relations, contradicting Moscow's vision of socialist internationalism, but at the same time gave his consent to further militarisation along the Sino-Soviet borders and a hardline course pushed by high-level officials from the party departments and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The hegemony of the confrontational neo-Stalinist discourse on China undermined a balanced perspective on the reforms in the adjacent country. However, its hegemony gradually weakened, as the general secretary's statements from 1980–1982 showed. The emergence of a reform course under Andropov created fertile soil for opening a new chapter in bilateral relations.

Gorbachev followed this line, highlighting the need for normalisation and the significance of the Asia-Pacific region while observing the ongoing reforms. Despite the inertia of the anti-Chinese discourse, he referred to the Chinese developments positively many times. The next chapters show that the neo-Leninist phase of perestroika resembled the Chinese pattern in many ways. The "Rakhmaninian" neo-Stalinist discourse lost its dominance, and a change of paradigm occurred in both politics and academia. By mid-1980s, a large part of the Soviet intelligentsia believed that the Chinese path was viable, and the Soviet Union might have drawn positive lessons from the Asian country. Interestingly, the most positive remarks about China and her reforms were made by liberal socialists and Westernists in general. But the country also attracted attention among the highest echelons of the state and Party inclusive of Ligachev and Ryzhkov. The situation, nevertheless, reversed in 1989 as the sides reached normalisation. While Moscow lambasted Maoist leftism at first, later it started to criticise the rightist turn under Deng's

leadership and eventually it castigated authoritarianism after the suppression of the opposition in 1989. Gorbachev abandoned the neo-Leninist discourse, and his perspective on China rapidly deteriorated. The paths of both countries split up again. The debacle of the neo-Leninist actors during the August coup destroyed the possibility to implement the Chinese reform model in the Soviet Union definitively.

Analysis of bilateral relations and perceptions of the Asian country from both a synchronic and diachronic perspective leads to the conclusion that China was a “significant other” for the Soviets. China influenced both the internal and external policies of the Soviet Union in one way or another, being an important factor in Soviet policy choices and decision-making, particularly during the Cold War. As for the post-1978 period, China attracted attention from both political elites and top experts and advisors and indirectly stimulated their interest in reforming the Stalinist model. The Chinese reforms were interpreted in largely positive terms by both neo-Leninist and liberal socialist discourses, which played a decisive role in Soviet perestroika. However, the eventual shift towards Western patterns pushed the Chinese experience, combining radical economic reforms with political authoritarianism, aside. Between 1978 and 1989, the Chinese reform and opening up and gradual rapprochement between both countries were all supportive of the Soviet perestroika. From this perspective, the opportunity to follow the Chinese path existed.

## 5 Soviet political discourses and Dengism

The preceding chapters analysed socioeconomic factors in the Soviet Union and China as well as China's role in Soviet policy and decision-making. The previous chapter summed up bilateral relations and identified different perspectives on China throughout Soviet history as well as approaches to the Asian country and its reforms after 1978. Interpretation of the Chinese politics, reform and opening up arose from the discursive structure within which the picture of China was constructed, being subjected to discourse's nodal point and linked to other elements of the chain of equivalence. This chapter presents a discourse analysis of individual Soviet political discourses, that is, neo-Stalinism, neo-Leninism, and liberal socialism, with minor remarks about Soviet populism. This method enables me to compare Soviet discourses with Dengism and formulate an explanation of the reason for the acceptance or rejection of the Chinese reform model at the fundamental discursive level.

### 5.1 Neo-Stalinism

Hegemony of neo-Stalinist discourse was typical of the entire Brezhnevite period. While being far from reviving both revolutionary and bureaucratic Stalinism, it preserved the Stalinist economic model and defended a wide array of its fundamentals and achievements. Interestingly, Stalin largely became "he-who-must-not-be-named". Whereas his policies were often addressed and appreciated, the Brezhnevite leaders did not call their controversial predecessor by name. The latter was taboo in a sense. It slightly changed in the neo-Leninist discourse, which explicitly addressed both positive and negative aspects of Stalin's rule in contrast to the liberal socialist discourse entailing a moralist attitude towards the leader and his unequivocal condemnation. It eventually led to a conclusion that the Stalinist model was not socialist whatsoever.

#### 5.1.1 *Political model*

The Brezhnevite neo-Stalinist discourse accepted the party programme which was approved by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress in 1961. It is of certain interest because the document embodied some features of Khrushchev's voluntarism and excessive optimism regarding the prospects of the construction of socialism and Communism in the country. Besides that, a frequent reference point for Soviet politicians became the CC Plenum held in October 1964, which approved Khrushchev's removal and the beginning of a new political line under Brezhnev, rather than the ground-breaking 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> party congresses. At the same time, the 1961 programme laid foundations for the fundamental concepts of the Brezhnevite period and the neo-Stalinist discourse.

In this line of reasoning, *socialism* (the central nodal point *par excellence*) was defined as a society without exploitation, anarchy in production, economic crises, unemployment, and poverty and with a permanent, plan-based economic development and incessant growth of living standards. The goal of socialist construction is to provide the population with material and cultural needs through *permanent* development and *perfection* of social production based on socialist (collective) ownership of the means of production, which makes the emergence of class divisions and antagonisms impossible. The neo-Stalinist discourse postulates that socialism is reachable only through socialist revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. Already before the Brezhnevite period, the party programme coined the term *really existing socialism*, which would turn into *real socialism* afterwards.<sup>623</sup> Several years later, Suslov defined real socialism as a society based on social ownership, collective labour and Marx's principle "to each according to his contribution" and as the world's first society that enabled *rational* and *conscious* management of social process and overcame inherent anarchy of previous socioeconomic formations.<sup>624</sup>

The concept of real socialism coexisted with that of *developed socialism*, which entered the last of the three Soviet constitutions in 1977. Developed socialism was seen as a result of the *perfection* of socialism and as a "triumph of Leninist ideas", that is, class- and science-based policies, democracy, genuine humanism, and moral purity.<sup>625</sup> Neo-Stalinist discourse insisted that developed socialism was an inevitable and long stage of the first phase of the Communist formation with the goals of the construction of material and technological base, full saturation of people's needs and consumption, fusion of all forms of socialist ownership and formation of a new man in the core.<sup>626</sup> Grishin argues that at the stage of developed socialism, *perestroika* of social relations on a *collectivist* basis is over and optimal balance between relations of production and productive forces as a basis for a proportionate and harmonious socioeconomic and spiritual development is reached.<sup>627</sup>

From a historical perspective, developed socialism was perceived as one of the milestones in Soviet development and a major achievement in the construction of Communism in the country. Suslov argues that socialism was built in the USSR already by the end of the 1930s as a result of industrialisation, collectivisation, and cultural revolution. Stalin's policies built on the October

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<sup>623</sup> *Programma* (1961), pp. 14-19.

<sup>624</sup> Suslov (1982), pp. 310-312.

<sup>625</sup> Grishin (1982), pp. 443, 680; Kirilenko (1980), p. 457.

<sup>626</sup> Suslov (1982), p. 194.

<sup>627</sup> Grishin (1982), p. 681.

Revolution and victory in the Civil War, and all these enabled the victory in the Great Patriotic War.<sup>628</sup> Aside from these achievements, Suslov mentions the establishment and development of the International Communist Movement, the emergence of the national liberation movement and détente as milestones in Soviet history.<sup>629</sup> Such a narrative legitimised the Stalinist model as well as the economic, social and external policies of the CPSU under Brezhnev while clearly indicating that the superpower claimed allegiance to a number of external political and military commitments (especially in the developing countries) along with a moderate course in relation to Western Europe.

This position can be interpreted in terms of strengthening détente through supporting anti-imperialist struggles worldwide and cementing the strategic parity. The neo-Stalinist interpretation of history also included the idea of a new *socialist/Communist civilisation* with a peculiar *Soviet way of life* of a new historical community of the *Soviet people*. The latter was defined as a qualitatively different and superior community based upon genuine equality, joint interests, shared goal (Communism) and the same ideology (Marxism-Leninism), while the Soviet way of life was conceptualised by means of free and creative labour, collectivism and solidarity, moral purity, developed consciousness, ideological conviction and patriotism.<sup>630</sup> These features were also described as Leninist ideas and values. The concept of Soviet people and Soviet civilisation embodied the idea of *convergence* and *integration* of different classes and social groups, nations as well as different forms of ownership, industry and agriculture, city and village.<sup>631</sup> The hegemonic discourse suppressed any conceptions and policies which would undermine this unity and permanent convergence.

In the neo-Stalinist discourse, developed socialism contained Khrushchev's notion of *all-people's state*, which replaced the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the latter became redundant after the elimination of exploitative classes and the socioeconomic conditions of their existence.<sup>632</sup> Nevertheless, the transition to all-people's state, which is accompanied by a parallel transformation of the Communist Party, does not undermine the *class* nature of the Soviet state and the ruling party either, only expands the scope for people's inclusion into governance. It entails a rise in the role of the CPSU and further *perfection* of *socialist*

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<sup>628</sup> Kirilenko (1980, p. 477); Suslov (1982), p. 195.

<sup>629</sup> Suslov (1982), pp. 144-145.

<sup>630</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 281; Kirilenko (1980), p. 476; Romanov (1983), p. 327.

<sup>631</sup> *Materialy* (1981), pp. 52-53.

<sup>632</sup> Suslov (1982), p. 199.

*democracy*.<sup>633</sup> The discourse distinguished socialist democracy from the bourgeois one. According to Ponomarev, the former guarantees direct participation in managing the state and society, direct influence of workers on economic management, and genuine equality of people and nations in political, economic as well as social fields.<sup>634</sup> In contrast, bourgeois democracy was depicted in negative terms as a system entailing chronic unemployment, economic crises, political and social oppression, decline in morality, expansion of crime and militarism. Socialist democracy was conceptualised as a “democracy of a new type” and linked to soviets and *glasnost*.<sup>635</sup> The latter concept was used a long time before Gorbachev’s perestroika, being an integral part of the neo-Stalinist discourse.

Despite frequent references to democracy and democratisation and adoption of the notion of *perfection of socialist democracy*, the neo-Stalinist discourse stepped back from Khrushchev’s ideas about socialist democracy, which were reaffirmed by the 1961 party programme. The document highlighted the need for accountability of soviets to voters, *glasnost*, control, open discussion, revocability of deputies, and election of all high-level state officials while envisaging a broad use of referenda, review of drafts by labour collectives and granting trade unions, Komsomol and other social organisations legislative initiative. In addition, more powers and responsibilities were to be devolved to lower-level bodies, local authorities, and enterprises.<sup>636</sup> The Brezhnevite neo-Stalinist discourse followed some of these ideas but toned down Khrushchev’s anti-bureaucratic ethos and stress on mass spontaneity and activity. In the last years of the Brezhnevite period, the debate about *democratisation* revived again, but it anticipated the rise of neo-Leninist actors and the new discourse rather than implying a substantial revision of anti-Stalinist discourse itself. Andropov invoked Lenin’s idea of socialism as the *creativity of the masses* and addressed the need to rethink the role of soviets as a peculiar and unprecedented form of democratism while the general secretary limited himself to discussing the *control* functions of the soviets as the main instrument of *perfection* of the Soviet political system.<sup>637</sup> The 26<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress (1981) declared that the role of primary party organisations was irreplaceable and *glasnost* played an important role in cultivating relations with the public. Nonetheless, *glasnost* was to be limited to the Party and its activities.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 258-260, 341.

<sup>634</sup> Ponomarev (1982), pp. 34-35, 41; Gromyko (1984), p. 59.

<sup>635</sup> Ponomarev (1982), p. 51; Tikhonov (1985), p. 344.

<sup>636</sup> *Programma* (1961), pp. 86-87, 103-105.

<sup>637</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 316, 319; Brezhnev (1979), p. 233.

<sup>638</sup> *Materialy* (1981), pp. 70-74.

The interest in the perfection of political and social organisations and their place in the political system, including the principle of *responsiveness* to the masses along with critical attitudes towards *bureaucratism*, were commonplace in the neo-Stalinist discourse, which laid the foundations for a certain continuity with neo-Leninism.<sup>639</sup> The same applies to Romanov's emphasis on *labour collectives* as the basic units of Soviet society, stronger role of local soviets in social and economic affairs as well as to the importance of due *cadre policy*.<sup>640</sup> Of not lower interest is Suslov's use of the concept *open society* to describe main features of socialist democratism. This notion, nonetheless, appeared only rarely and was forgotten by neo-Leninism in contrast to its later reappearance in the liberal socialist discourse.<sup>641</sup> This was not the case of the idea of democracy and political creativity of the masses as an accelerator of economic growth which was taken over by both neo-Leninist and liberal socialist discourses in certain contrast to Marxist emphasis on the determining role of economic base.<sup>642</sup> Yet, neither neo-Stalinism nor neo-Leninism went so far to give precedence to democratisation over economic perfection and reform respectively. At the same time, the abovementioned Kirilenko's statement indicates that democracy and people's active participation in the governance processes were a relevant topic throughout individual discourses, however different concrete interpretations were. The neo-Stalinist discourse always linked socialist democracy to *discipline*, law, and order, be it at the intraparty or soviet level, which were to preserve the hegemony of the discourse and due political line and prevent any substantial revision of the status quo.<sup>643</sup> Hence the overuse of and overemphasis on the concept of *perfection*.

The latter was employed in a wide array of contexts including but not limited to *perfection* of social(ist) relations, political system, developed socialism, social production, socialist society, socialist democracy, central planning, and economic management. Quite often was it accompanied by the adjective *permanent* with the aim to underline the stable, crisis-free, linear, and teleological way of development. The very concept of perfection clearly indicated that socialism had already been built and only partial adjustments were needed. It helps us to explain the aversion to reform. Concurrently, *perestroika* was an integral element of neo-Stalinist discourse. Unlike the other two discourses, it was usually related to economic issues, even though the notion sometimes bore non-economic meanings, for instance, *perestroika of the party*

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<sup>639</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 616; *Materialy* (1981), p. 10.

<sup>640</sup> Romanov (1983), pp. 315-316.

<sup>641</sup> Suslov (1982), p. 313.

<sup>642</sup> Kirilenko (1980), p. 640.

<sup>643</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 320; Suslov (1982), p. 201.

*and ideological work or material and spiritual perestroika.*<sup>644</sup> Perestroika went hand in hand with *acceleration*. This moment was broadly used in the economic realm and, therefore, will be analysed in greater detail in the following section.

### 5.1.2 *Economic model*

Neo-Stalinist discourse cemented the Stalinist economic model and legitimised it by referring to “Leninist principles” of economic development such as central planning, democratic centralism, combination of single political power and workers’ participation in management, *khozraschet*, unity of material and moral incentives and mass competition.<sup>645</sup> The main reference point in the economic field was the CC Plenum in October 1964 which was perceived as the beginning of a successful economic policy based on *perfection* of the *centrally planned system* and development of economic methods in management.<sup>646</sup> The role of economic methods were, however, weak and the main way to overcome existing flaws and increase productivity and performance was largely seen in seeking and using reserves and strengthening discipline.<sup>647</sup> The importance of moral and ideological incentives were at least as high as that of economic stimuli. In other words, neo-Stalinism preserved the Stakhanovite model in a sense. The strategic priority was a *permanent rise* in the material and cultural level of society and the *economic power* of the country as a whole through the *permanent perfection* of the planning mechanism.<sup>648</sup> Not by coincidence, Tikhonov declared that economic planning was superior to the capitalist economy, representing one of the greatest achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>649</sup> An important part of the neo-Stalinist economic conception was the imperative of unity of economic and social policies aimed at providing people with *full welfare* and *free and all-round development*.<sup>650</sup> Nonetheless, these ideas imposed substantial limits on discussions about higher economic efficiency because social guarantees and overall socioeconomic convergence must not have been weakened and individual labour activities and related differentiation would have allegedly undermined the achievements of socialist construction.

The fundamental problem thus was to increase *labour productivity* without revision of the Stalinist model, in line with the provisions of the 1961 party programme, according to which the

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<sup>644</sup> *Materialy* (1981), pp. 57, 75; Suslov (1982), p. 342.

<sup>645</sup> Ustinov (1979), p. 8.

<sup>646</sup> Kirilenko (1980), p. 622.

<sup>647</sup> Suslov (1982), pp. 253-254.

<sup>648</sup> Tikhonov (1985), pp. 197, 261.

<sup>649</sup> Tikhonov (1985), p. 266.

<sup>650</sup> Tikhonov (1985), p. 444.

socialist economy combined the *acceleration of technological progress* with full employment and *permanent development of the material and technological basis* with its *permanent perfection*.<sup>651</sup> The 25<sup>th</sup> Congress (1976) defined the improvement of education and technical equipment through due development of heavy industry in general and engineering industry in particular together with improving quality of labour and accelerating scientific and technological progress as the main instruments for rising efficiency.<sup>652</sup> An emphasis was put on automatisisation and mechanisation due to the growing lack of labour force.<sup>653</sup> The latter along with ongoing extensive forms of production, insufficient material incentives, low use of economic instruments and indicators such as *khozraschet*, profit, price and bonus, imbalanced application of democratic centralism in economic management as well as one-sided dominance of raw materials in the structure of export were addressed by the general secretary at the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>654</sup> The overall conceptual framework, however, thwarted the implementation of innovative policies as the perfection of economic management and planning remained the central points in the economic discourse at that moment.

Neo-Stalinism experienced partial adjustments at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s when the Politburo members started to pay stronger attention to *perestroika*, *acceleration*, *glasnost*' and *economic democratisation* instead of mere perfection. The aforementioned signs gained a slightly different meaning, which can be hardly abstracted away from the rise of rival neo-Leninist discourse. The general secretary facilitated this development as criticising inertia and old ways of thinking from time to time.<sup>655</sup> Brezhnev admitted that the existing mechanisms of economic management and planning as well as economic methods and discipline were not satisfactory, which undermined efficiency and transition to *intensive development*.<sup>656</sup> He then concluded that the *perestroika* of planning and economic methods was necessary and underlined this task through connecting the concept of *perestroika* with acceleration—*acceleration of perestroika*.<sup>657</sup> Suslov even spoke about *revolutionary perestroika*, a concept which would become a commonplace in the liberal socialist discourse.<sup>658</sup> The notion of *perestroika* spread to a wide array of areas, expressing the increasingly urgent need to revise economic policies in order to

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<sup>651</sup> *Programma* (1961), p. 67; Romanov (1983), p. 547.

<sup>652</sup> *Materialy* (1976), pp. 37-42.

<sup>653</sup> Grishin (1982), p. 375.

<sup>654</sup> *Materialy* (1976), pp. 47-60.

<sup>655</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 619.

<sup>656</sup> Brezhnev (1981), p. 467.

<sup>657</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 620; Brezhnev (1982), p. 303.

<sup>658</sup> Suslov (1982), p. 202.

achieve intensive forms of production and growth based upon scientific and technological progress, economic rationality, efficiency and quality. It included the introduction of new forms of organisation such as brigades as well as the overcoming of “psychological barriers”.<sup>659</sup>

The turn to *intensification* was an important aspect of the late Brezhnevite period and it was anchored in the documents of the 26<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress (1981) both in industry and agriculture. The problem of intensification of rural production coincided with what Kosygin called *perestroika of peasants' life*.<sup>660</sup> The general secretary, in turn, stressed the need for a single agro-cultural complex as a new unit of planning and management in the field paired with enhancing progressive income based on results in a similar way as Gorbachev would do several years later.<sup>661</sup> Despite the central role of kolkhozy and sovkhozy in Soviet agriculture, the 26<sup>th</sup> Congress acknowledged the importance of *private plots*. The latter were to be supported not only at the individual basis but also at the level of enterprise.<sup>662</sup> Such policies would create a certain leeway for individual forms of farming and legitimise progressive and innovative methods of production. Interestingly, Brezhnev used to refer to Lenin's late work *On Cooperation* (1923) in which the founder of the Soviet state dealt with a mixed economy and the role of cooperative movement in the rural areas.<sup>663</sup> This work became a key reference point in both neo-Leninist and liberal socialist discourse during perestroika. One can, therefore, assume that the late Brezhnevite texts were shaped by reform-minded actors who were critical of neo-Stalinism. This explanation builds on the metamorphosis of the official discourse in the last years of Brezhnev's rule, which manifested itself in several areas concurrently, being in growing contrast with the policies set by the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Finally, perestroika and acceleration entailed an emphasis on *economic democracy*, that is, enhancing the role of labour collectives in management at the level of enterprise and wider participation of the latter in central planning in conjunction with granting the enterprises more autonomy along the lines of *khozraschet*. Such measures were supposed to boost people's *creative initiative* and consequently *socialist competition* as a whole.<sup>664</sup> Competition between individual economic subjects was to be made more transparent (*glasnost'*) and strengthened by

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<sup>659</sup> Romanov (1983), pp. 518, 551. This psychological motive played an important role in neo-Leninism as well as liberal socialism.

<sup>660</sup> Kosygin (1979), p. 524.

<sup>661</sup> Brezhnev (1982), pp. 505-507.

<sup>662</sup> *Materialy* (1981), pp. 48, 51.

<sup>663</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 393; Lenin (1951).

<sup>664</sup> Grishin (1982), p. 403; Kosygin (1979), p. 546.

material incentives.<sup>665</sup> The idea of economic democracy was materialised soon afterwards when neo-Leninism took the lead at the highest level.

### 5.1.3 External model

Neo-Stalinist discourse insisted on the idea of a struggle between two antagonist systems, that is, socialism and capitalism, and depicted the current stage of development as a period of *global transition* from capitalism to socialism and the inevitable expansion of socialism on a global scale in contrast to the deepening *crisis of capitalism* and *bourgeois ideology*.<sup>666</sup> This interpretation was borrowed from Khrushchev's party programme which was typical of utter historical optimism and triumphalism. The Brezhnevite leadership did not give it up even though most voluntarist features were put aside. The 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Congress put forward somewhat more nuanced picture with a focus on the growing role of transnational corporations and rivalry between imperialist powers themselves which was seen in the rise of Western Europe and Japan. These observations were accompanied by a proposition about *increasing struggle* against imperialism and neocolonialism, the rise of national liberation movements, intensifying class struggle in capitalist countries, and strengthening Communist movement there.<sup>667</sup> Grishin highlighted the invincibility of *real socialism* along with its inevitable spreading while Ponomarev lambasted *imperialism* for provoking frictions, conflicts and wars, meddling in other countries' affairs, triggering arms race and resorting to neocolonial practices.<sup>668</sup> Neo-Stalinism adopted Lenin's theory of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, which helps us to explain why Moscow was so sure about the final decline of capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Interestingly, many leaders used to speak about the *intensification of ideological and politico-military struggle* between both antagonist camps.<sup>669</sup> One cannot overlook an affinity with Stalin's concept of *intensification of class struggle* which was formulated to justify the terror against kulaks in Soviet village, purges in the ruling party and repressions as such.<sup>670</sup>

The confrontational rhetoric and class attitude were mixed with stress on détente and peace-building measures. This ambiguity was a very typical feature of the neo-Stalinist discourse. Gromyko characterised Soviet foreign policy as being of class and internationalist, democratic,

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<sup>665</sup> *Materialy* (1981), p. 203.

<sup>666</sup> *Programma* (1961), p. 5.

<sup>667</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 366; Kirilenko (1980), p. 604; *Materialy* (1976), pp. 27-30; *Materialy* (1981), pp. 20-21.

<sup>668</sup> Grishin (1982), p. 440; Ponomarev (1982), p. 28.

<sup>669</sup> Suslov (1982), p. 341.

<sup>670</sup> See Stalin (1949), pp. 157-187.

humanist, peaceful, and historically optimistic character.<sup>671</sup> Andropov, Ponomarev, and Ustinov, in turn, argued that Moscow's foreign policy was aimed at creating suitable external conditions for the socialist construction in the country, strengthening the unity of socialist commonwealth and support for labour and national liberation movements, peace and peaceful coexistence.<sup>672</sup> Neo-Stalinism as well as neo-Leninism insisted on class nature of peaceful coexistence. From this perspective, détente was seen as a form of class struggle whose primary goal was to create favourable, that is, peaceful external conditions for the construction of Communism in socialist countries, social progress, and struggle for interests of the working class.<sup>673</sup>

Despite its largely utilitarian definition, détente became a centrepiece of Brezhnevite foreign policy and Soviet external model and gradually started to incline to turning into a value in itself. According to the general secretary, détente was a respect for the vital interests of others, a transition towards normal relations between countries, and commitment to peaceful solution of conflicts.<sup>674</sup> Détente was to materialise Leninist peaceful coexistence in practice while overcoming the Cold War between capitalist and socialist countries.<sup>675</sup> The stress on peaceful coexistence in general and détente in particular led Ponomarev to the conclusion that peace was the highest human value and Andropov to the statement according to which détente was not only a tactical pause between wars but a fundamental position.<sup>676</sup> This move indicated the rise of neo-Leninist interpretation of external model, being linked to the growing awareness of the need for focus on domestic socioeconomic problems and prospective reforms.

Soviet leaders repeatedly declared that their country did not seek military superiority. Brezhnev was convinced that approximate equality and parity were sufficient.<sup>677</sup> From this point of view, it was the *strategic military parity* which enabled the transition from Cold War to détente and which was the latter's material basis.<sup>678</sup> This perspective was embodied in the peace programme approved by the 24<sup>th</sup> Congress (1971) and its adjustment at the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress five years later. The 1971 programme laid a conceptual foundation for neo-Stalinist policies in the field. It consisted of the following provisions: (1) recognition of territorial results of World War II in Europe,

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<sup>671</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 227.

<sup>672</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 266; Ponomarev (1982), p. 17; Ustinov (1982), pp. 42-43.

<sup>673</sup> Kirilenko (1980), p. 370; *Materialy* (1976), p. 33; *Programma* (1961), p. 59.

<sup>674</sup> Brezhnev (1979), pp. 590-591.

<sup>675</sup> Suslov (1982), p. 265.

<sup>676</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 266; Ponomarev (1982), p. 18.

<sup>677</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 311-312.

<sup>678</sup> *Materialy* (1971), p. 16; Gromyko (1984), p. 195.

promotion of détente and pan-European process as an instrument of collective security in Europe, and dissolution of military blocs in the subcontinent; (2) promotion of a disarmament process including the end of the arms race, closure of all offshore military bases, ban on nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons, suspension of nuclear tests and establishment of nuclear-free zones; (3) strengthening the central role of the UN and giving up military solution to conflicts; (4) elimination of colonial regimes worldwide; and (5) promotion of win-win cooperation in all areas with all states which were open to such cooperation as well as support for multilateral solution of such problems as environmental protection, extraction of raw materials, development of infrastructure, health issues and exploration of the outer space and oceans.<sup>679</sup>

The 1976 programme paid special attention to (1) the termination of arms race and disarmament, (2) win-win cooperation based on peaceful coexistence, (3) elimination of remnants of colonialism and racism and (4) prevention of discrimination in international trade paired with the establishment of just international economic relations.<sup>680</sup> At the conceptual level, Brezhnevite neo-Stalinist discourse accentuated peaceful coexistence, cooperation and multilateral and inclusive international ecosystem. After the strategic parity and related security of the socialist commonwealth were reached, the Soviet leadership became increasingly concerned with global disarmament on a reciprocal basis, particularly as far as weapons of mass annihilation were concerned.<sup>681</sup> This narrative gradually found expression in concrete political unilateral steps including Moscow's moratorium on the deployment of some nuclear weapons in the European part of the country, freezing of the existing arsenal and suspension of replacement of SS-4 and SS-5 with SS-20 missiles, plans on reduction of medium-range ballistic missiles and, finally, public commitment to no-first-use of nuclear weapons which was made in 1982.<sup>682</sup>

However, this cooperative peace agenda coexisted with a largely offensive posture, which remained an integral part of neo-Stalinism until the very end. The hardline rhetoric can be demonstrated in Grishin's statements. In line with the notion of intensification of ideological and political confrontation, the Politburo member called for an "irreconcilable struggle" against bourgeois ideology, revisionism, rightist and leftist opportunism, Maoism as well as Sionism. He insisted that adversaries tried to use détente for ideological infiltration of the Soviet Union, lambasting the West for spreading "imperialist propaganda".<sup>683</sup> Concurrently with the promotion

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<sup>679</sup> *Materialy* (1971), pp. 29-30.

<sup>680</sup> *Materialy* (1976), pp. 25-26.

<sup>681</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 299.

<sup>682</sup> Brezhnev (1982), pp. 425, 538.

<sup>683</sup> Grishin (1982), pp. 227, 312.

of peace policies, Gromyko asserted that “sabotage centres in the West” in collaboration with “Beijing’s hegemonists” waged a propagandist and psychological war against socialist countries, which was in breach of international law.<sup>684</sup> Needless to say, such statements undermined constructive and cooperative actions and measures. This narrative emerged from the conviction of a permanent external threat which existed since the outset of the Soviet power. Communist leaders referred to the military intervention following the October Revolution, refusal of Soviet plans of a collective security system in Europe in the 1930s, and concurrent attempts to set Hitler’s Germany against the USSR or initiating the Cold War against the socialist superpower in a moment when the latter was primarily concerned with postwar reconstruction.<sup>685</sup>

The sense of external danger permeated neo-Stalinist discourse and contributed to inadequate and disproportionate conduct and exaggerated reactions to external pressures and behaviour of Western actors. In accordance with Marxist-Leninist perspective on the development of imperialism, neo-Stalinism blamed the U.S. for dominance over other countries and described the “American monopolist capital” as the main source of militarism and military threats all around the world.<sup>686</sup> The same applied to NATO. Ustinov asserted that reactionaries made efforts to destroy détente, and return humanity to Cold War.<sup>687</sup> In other words, the Soviet leaders interpreted détente as a different stage of development at the international level and a new model of coexistence overcoming military confrontation while preserving and possibly intensifying the class struggle between socialism and capitalism by political, economic and ideological means. However, such an interpretation maintained a vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecies on both sides—the Soviets suspected Washington of seeking military superiority over the USSR and these concerns materialised in Reagan and his Strategic Defence Initiative. The Americans, in turn, believed in the existence of Soviet threat and the inherent expansionism of the Soviet bloc which materialised in the intervention in Afghanistan. An increasing number of actors, therefore, got aware of the need for a new paradigm of external model and international relations.

Even though the relations with the capitalist world in general and the U.S. in particular were in the centre of attention, the neo-Stalinist discourse put emphasis on developing countries or the Third World, presenting the Soviet Union as a leader of the national liberation movement and global emancipation and the engine of democratisation of international relations.<sup>688</sup> Interaction

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<sup>684</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 273.

<sup>685</sup> Brezhnev (1979), p. 310.

<sup>686</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 314.

<sup>687</sup> Ustinov (1979), p. 445.

<sup>688</sup> Ponomarev (1982), p. 76; Ustinov (1982), p. 57.

between the USSR and the Third World countries was depicted as a *new type of international economic relations* free of exploitation by imperialist transnational monopolies and neocolonialism while the political relations were allegedly based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence as well as anti-imperialist solidarity. Soviet leaders considered the developing countries natural allies in the fight against imperialism and interpreted the local developments through the prism of transition to socialism. Importantly, neo-Stalinism recognised different paths towards socialism but insisted on the possibility of the only socialist model, i.e., the developed or real socialism that existed in the USSR. This conception entailed a positive perspective on the Leninist NEP, which was seen as an appropriate model for those developing countries which would decide to start the construction of socialism.<sup>689</sup> Even this idea, nevertheless, coincided with the Soviet experience because the NEP became a strategy that was implemented in a country with underdeveloped capitalist productive forces and relations of production and limited role of industry in contrast to agriculture and peripheral position in the capitalist world system.<sup>690</sup>

When addressing the relations with developing countries, neo-Stalinism largely used the concept of perestroika. The latter was connected with a number of objects, but all of them can be subsumed into a broader idea of revision of international order. Gromyko and Kosygin highlighted the cause of *perestroika of international relations* on the basis of peaceful coexistence as a precondition of a *stable, just and democratic world*.<sup>691</sup> Tikhonov declared that the Soviet Union was sympathetic to the *perestroika of international economic relations* to make them just and democratic as the fall of colonialism made the perestroika of international economic relations based on democracy necessary.<sup>692</sup> A more general goal was, nonetheless, a *perestroika of the global economic order* based on justice.<sup>693</sup> The dominant discourse, therefore, linked perestroika to such concepts as democracy, justice, peace, social and economic progress and stability. This chain of equivalence is very similar to that of both neo-Leninism and liberal socialism, which shows a considerable degree of continuity in Soviet external model.

A central position in the hierarchy of the external model was occupied by the *socialist commonwealth*, the closest Soviet allies who were integrated with Moscow through multiple channels, first and foremost, CMEA, and Warsaw Treaty Organisation. The socialist

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<sup>689</sup> Ponomarev (1982), pp. 61, 67-68, 72-73.

<sup>690</sup> See Lenin (1923).

<sup>691</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 525; Kosygin (1979), p. 501.

<sup>692</sup> *Materialy* (1981), p. 15; Tikhonov (1985), p. 429.

<sup>693</sup> Brezhnev (1981), p. 555.

commonwealth was seen as a chief instrument for countering the hostile *encirclement* of the USSR.<sup>694</sup> This community of countries and their Communist parties were based on *proletarian* or *socialist internationalism*. Both terms were used simultaneously and without clear differentiation, even though sometimes the former referred rather to Communist and labour political parties while the latter to socialist countries. Socialist internationalism was to be a new type of relations between countries and nations based on a single ideology, common goals, and will.<sup>695</sup> It went beyond a mere peaceful coexistence, for the latter was applied to relations with non-socialist countries. The concept of socialist internationalism was embodied in the *International Communist Movement* as the principal vehicle of Soviet influence over other Communist, labour and revolutionary political forces. Not by coincidence, neo-Stalinism insisted on the crucial importance of the ICM for world socialism and international relations, opposing any voice about its uselessness, anachronism, and disintegration. The dispute over socialist internationalism became one of the elements of Sino-Soviet rift which affected bilateral relations in a negative way.

## 5.2 Neo-Leninism

Neo-Leninist discourse was dominating in the first years of reform. It took the lead after Brezhnev's death, being enforced by Andropov. Naturally, the neo-Stalinist discourse preserved a certain relevance and influence, but the rise of new actors and concepts clearly indicated that a new period began.

### 5.2.1 *Political model*

After assuming power, neo-Leninism kept central elements of neo-Stalinist political discourse but started to create new chains of equivalence and revised their content. The concepts of *developed socialism* and its *perfection* were preserved at first, nevertheless, the focus on democracy deepened.<sup>696</sup> Socialist democratism entailed a concurrent increase in the Party's role and expansion of democracy in many areas inclusive of strengthening economic rights and powers both at the level of enterprises and labour collectives, expanding the powers of soviets and local bodies, improving people's control over deputies and increasing accountability of party and state actors and their ties with citizens, which presupposed wider *glasnost'*. Widening *glasnost'* combined with a stress on *social justice* and *discipline* can be demonstrated by

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<sup>694</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 440.

<sup>695</sup> *Materialy* (1976), p. 7; Suslov (1982), p. 170.

<sup>696</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 473; Chernenko (1985), p. 7.

Ligachev's assessment of the situation in Uzbekistan made in 1984. The CC secretary commented on violations of norms of socialist morality, justice and legality including corruption and misappropriation. Importantly, not only individuals were blamed but also systematic flaws were addressed as Ligachev pointed to the lack of control of party representatives by rank and file and labour collectives as well as persecution of citizens for their opinions.<sup>697</sup>

Attention was paid to a larger *intraparty democracy*, within which the number of elected posts was to rise, *delineation of the functions of party and state bodies* as well as cuts in the administrative apparatus at all levels.<sup>698</sup> According to Chernenko, party management of economic affairs was to focus on due *cadre policy* rather than micromanagement and infringement on economic processes.<sup>699</sup> Politburo also addressed the need for activation of party members and society in conjunction with strengthening discipline and social justice.<sup>700</sup> Such reform ideas were multilayered and quite comprehensive but the ruling role of the Communist Party was preserved. Andropov argued that weakening the power monopoly would entail a turn to "bourgeois-reformist path" and the rise of nationalism, conflicts, and tendencies towards political pluralism.<sup>701</sup> The general secretaries admitted that Communists did not know their own society sufficiently and called for new ideas and creative development of Marxism-Leninism which could not be reduced to the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Criticism of dogmatism and stagnation was, at the same time, accompanied by an insistence on Marxism-Leninism as the only correct and permitted theory and ideology.<sup>702</sup>

An important manifestation of the neo-Leninist discourse was Gorbachev's conference speech delivered in December 1984 in which he implicitly put forward his policy priorities. Even though the conference's title addressed the *perfection of developed socialism*, Gorbachev abandoned the latter, replacing it with the *perfection of socialism* only. This choice demonstrated the distance from neo-Stalinism and anticipated the need for reforming the existing model. Similarly, the notion of *real socialism* gradually disappeared from the official vocabulary, even though it was used by a CC plenum held in October 1985 and by lower-level party delegates at the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>703</sup> In addition, the Soviet model began to be called *developing socialism* to show that

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<sup>697</sup> Ligachev (1989), pp. 73-77.

<sup>698</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 430, 478-479, 486; Chernenko (1985), pp. 51-53, 339; Ligachev (1989), p. 78.

<sup>699</sup> Chernenko (1985), p. 9.

<sup>700</sup> Chernenko (1985), p. 10; Gorbachev (2008a), pp. 515.

<sup>701</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 482.

<sup>702</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 432-435; Gorbachev (2008a), p. 436; Gorbachev (2008b), p. 78.

<sup>703</sup> Gorbachev (1988c), p. 62; *Materialy* (1986), p. 207.

the country was in the early stages of the construction of socialism, which coincided with an analogous conceptual change in China. In leaders' speeches, developing socialism coexisted with the notion of perfection of socialism, which was identified with the *acceleration of socioeconomic development* and *perestroika*.<sup>704</sup> In the abovementioned speech from 1984, Gorbachev's interpretation of perestroika entailed "deep transformation" in economy and society including perestroika of economic management, implementation of commodity-money relations, rethinking democratic centralism, deepening socialist democracy, strengthening welfare state, perfection of the Soviet political system, stress on autonomy of enterprises and the role of labour collectives as well as local bodies, transparency in the work of both party and state bodies and fight against bureaucracy. From Gorbachev's perspective, the essence of socialism is *people's vital creativity*, which implies the activation of the *human factor*.<sup>705</sup>

The concept of perestroika was taken over from neo-Stalinism. While being described as "deep transformation" at first, it gradually started to be connected with the idea of a second socialist revolution with the aim of a revival of Leninist conception of socialism and "revolutionary purification and rejuvenation" that was comparable with the importance of NEP.<sup>706</sup> As before, the term was used in a wide array of contexts and with numerous adjectives and objects, which resulted in certain unclarity of its actual content. Gorbachev defined perestroika as *economic reform plus democracy*, as a revival of socialism, overcoming people's *alienation* from power, economy, and spiritual values.<sup>707</sup> Even though liberal socialist actors such as Iakovlev advocated an all-encompassing definition of perestroika as a revolutionary transformation of all spheres of life, the acceleration of socioeconomic development, construction of democratic socialism and people's rule, neo-Leninist discourse focused on economic reform while avoiding excessive liberalisation in the political sphere.<sup>708</sup>

Economy was perceived as the decisive dimension of social life, hence democratisation of the economy and perestroika in economy were the top priorities.<sup>709</sup> Not by coincidence, Gorbachev used to define perestroika as a *scientific and technological revolution plus planned economy*. At the CC Plenum in January 1987, this formula was accompanied by vital creativity of the masses, development of democracy and socialist self-management, discipline, glasnost', respect for a

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<sup>704</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 222.

<sup>705</sup> Gorbachev (2008b), pp. 79-102.

<sup>706</sup> Gorbachev (2009a), p. 432; Gorbachev (1987), p. 46; Ryzhkov (1987a), p. 4.

<sup>707</sup> Gorbachev (2009b), pp. 30, 278, 313.

<sup>708</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 183.

<sup>709</sup> Gorbachev (2008e), p. 411; Ryzhkov (1987a), pp. 6-7.

person, revival of democratic centralism in economic management, implementation of economic instruments, commodity-money relations, full *khozraschet* and socialist entrepreneurship.<sup>710</sup> The *priority of economic reform* emerged from the idea that perestroika was subordinate to the notion of *acceleration* which had primarily economic content.<sup>711</sup> The 27<sup>th</sup> Congress declared that acceleration entailed an increase in the pace of economic growth, new quality of the growth based on intensification of production, scientific and technological progress, structural revision of production and improving living standards. The acceleration strategy also entailed perfection of social relations, socialist justice, revival of political and ideological work, deepening socialist democracy as well as overcoming inertia, stagnation, and conservatism.<sup>712</sup> All these priorities can be subsumed into the concept of perfection of socialism whose goal was to accelerate the move towards Communism.<sup>713</sup>

Even though democratisation was an integral part of the neo-Leninist discourse since the very beginning, it had its specifics which made the conception far from “bourgeois liberalisation”.<sup>714</sup> In the political area, the neo-Leninist democratism followed many aspects of neo-Stalinism with the latter’s notion of *perfection of Soviet/socialist democracy* including activation of soviets and social organisations, *glasnost*, delineation of party and state bodies and fight against bureaucratism.<sup>715</sup> Yet neo-Leninism went beyond these boundaries. *Economic democracy* entailed not only the autonomy of enterprises (*khozraschet*) and the control role of labour collectives but election of managers and granting labour collectives some executive powers. Democratisation of the political system, in turn, envisaged *economic* independence of local soviets, radical expansion of elective positions in the state administration, reform of the ruling party itself inclusive of strengthening bottom-up instruments and revision of the election system.<sup>716</sup> Democracy was conceptually intertwined with *glasnost* and both concepts were seen as conditions and results of perestroika simultaneously. Both democratisation and expansion of *glasnost* were considered central in the fight against bureaucratism and neo-Stalinist discourse

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<sup>710</sup> Gorbachev (2008e), p. 401.

<sup>711</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 61.

<sup>712</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 21; *XXVII s"ezd* (1986b), p. 298.

<sup>713</sup> Ryzhkov (1989), p. 91.

<sup>714</sup> Ligachev (1989), p. 200.

<sup>715</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 55.

<sup>716</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 160; Shevardnadze (1986a), pp. 14-15.

and accompanied with an emphasis on *discipline* and struggle with moral decline, alcoholism and other negative social phenomena.<sup>717</sup>

Neo-Leninism highlighted the imperative of *social justice* and individual development within the Soviet community. The former was based on strong social protection inclusive of the right to work, social benefits such as free education and health care, or a robust pension system as well as the non-existence of exploitation, unemployment and poverty.<sup>718</sup> Social justice was also related to stress on *socialist legality* and law. The traditional Marxist-Leninist concept of socialist legality was to be perfected while countering legal nihilism.<sup>719</sup> Neo-Leninism, nonetheless, pursued legal positivism rather than natural law which was typical of liberal socialism. This fact imposed limitations on the potential of expansion of political and civil rights, democratisation and liberalisation. Activisation of human factor through perfection of economic governance (*khoraschet*, economic democracy), perfection of ideology and social life as well as political reform was aimed at “harmonious socioeconomic development” but this remained within the framework of the one-party system with the ruling ideology and mixed economy at most.<sup>720</sup> An eventual adoption of the concept of *socialist pluralism of opinions, interests and needs* was the utmost point which was possible within the neo-Leninist discourse and was necessarily accompanied by a struggle against “bourgeois ideology”.<sup>721</sup>

Similarly, neo-Leninism was far from a strongly negative and moralist interpretation of Soviet and Russian history. The interpretation of the socialist past played an important role in the legitimisation of the socioeconomic and political status quo and excessive departure from own history endangered the legitimacy of the system and social stability as such. The neo-Leninist discourse, therefore, reformulated the neo-Stalinist interpretation of history but preserved considerable *continuity*. Historical milestones of the socialist construction in the country were similar, even though the narrative usually started from the revolution in 1905–1907 instead of the October Revolution. An attention was also paid to the February Revolution. The latter was followed by the October Revolution, nationalisation and solution of the nationality question, industrialisation, collectivisation and cultural revolution in the 1930s, victory in the Great Patriotic War, emergence of the socialist commonwealth, construction of all-people’s state and

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<sup>717</sup> Ligachev (1989), p. 156; Shevardnadze (1986a), p. 15.

<sup>718</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 99; Gorbachev (2009b), p. 350.

<sup>719</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 107; Gorbachev (2009b), p. 342.

<sup>720</sup> Gorbachev (1987), pp. 102-104.

<sup>721</sup> Gorbachev (2009c), p. 374; *Materialy* (1986), p. 183.

achieving strategic parity with the West.<sup>722</sup> The narrative thus integrated the achievements of all periods of the Soviet and also pre-revolutionary past while toning down excessive optimism whose remnants survived in neo-Stalinism with its concept of developed socialism and the latter's perfection as well as with an overly optimistic perspective on the ICM and world revolutionary process and the USSR's role in it.

Of special interest is the evaluation of Stalin's rule. From the neo-Leninist point of view, Stalin defended Leninism, enjoying the support of a majority of party members. His problem was that he mechanically applied the methods, which was used during the period of struggle against enemies of the Soviet power, to the period of peaceful construction of socialism. Stalin's personality was contradictory, but it corresponded to the objective socioeconomic and political contradictions in Soviet society at that time. The Soviet leader made great achievements as well as serious political mistakes inclusive of mass repressions and abuse of power. The cause of the terror was not seen in his personality, that is, subjective factors, but in objective economic conditions, heritage of the civil war, the existence of external threats, and widespread negative attitudes towards the NEP. All these factors made democratisation of the Soviet system impossible.<sup>723</sup> Gorbachev criticised Stalin for an incorrect, predominantly administrative attitude towards the peasantry but insisted that the struggle against kulaks was correct and collectivisation gave positive results after all.<sup>724</sup> By and large, the Stalinist economic model performed well up until the 1970s.<sup>725</sup> Khrushchev's policies were interpreted in positive terms except for the first secretary's subjectivism and voluntarism paired with incorrect approach towards private plots and tax burden of peasants which accelerated their alienation from land and other means of production.<sup>726</sup> One can conclude that the historical narrative did not undermine the Soviet system and its legitimacy, since it did not deny achievements of the past and any stage of the construction either. The past and reform present remained connected with the final goal, that is, Communism.<sup>727</sup>

### 5.2.2 *Economic model*

Neo-Leninism addressed the declining labour productivity and economic growth and formulated a wide array of policies to give a new impetus to the Soviet economy. The Stalinist model was

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<sup>722</sup> *Materialy* (1986), pp. 124-127.

<sup>723</sup> Gorbachev (2009a), pp. 337-341, 404-405.

<sup>724</sup> Gorbachev (2009a), p. 421.

<sup>725</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 22.

<sup>726</sup> Gorbachev (2009a), p. 429; Gorbachev (2009d), p. 493.

<sup>727</sup> Gorbachev (2009a), p. 459.

criticised not for moral-based but economic reasons. The Stalinist economy was considered correct and justified under specific historical circumstances which were, however, over and such a level of centralisation and direct planning became obsolete.<sup>728</sup> Extensive discussions about the negative side effects of the old model did not imply unconditional distance and substantial discontinuities.

The new course was initially based on the concepts of *perestroika*, *perfection* and *acceleration*. Perestroika stood for a reform of the whole system of economic management, which was to be made more efficient through the extensive introduction of economic, instead of administrative, methods with a focus on the development of credit and financial systems, devolution of economic decision-making to lower levels, including local party and soviet bodies, and implementation of economic democracy, focus on material incentives and fight against *uravnivka* in both income and consumption.<sup>729</sup> Chernenko, at the same time, oscillated between neo-Stalinist and neo-Leninist economic perspective. While addressing the need for a transition to intensive production and a rise in economic efficiency and allowing new economic methods and experiments, he believed that substantial improvement of labour productivity can be reached within the existing economic model, which remained to be largely Stalinist.<sup>730</sup>

Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev alike put the concept of *acceleration* at the centre of their politico-economic thinking. In the Brezhnevite period, the acceleration applied primarily to the scientific and technological development and progress while the content started to expand under the influence of neo-Leninism. As a result, the concept was used in connection with socioeconomic development in its entirety.<sup>731</sup> Acceleration was identified with a new quality of growth and transition from partial improvements to a comprehensive and *radical reform* of management and economy, a *qualitative transformation* and fundamental reconstruction of economy.<sup>732</sup> Not by coincidence, the main task of the 12<sup>th</sup> five-year plan (1986–1990) was defined as the acceleration of the pace and efficiency of economic development, which presupposed a considerable increase in capital investment to boost innovation and scientific and technological progress that, in turn, would yield higher productivity to compensate for the rise in expenditures.<sup>733</sup> Neo-Leninism maintained the strong role of *planning* in economy but

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<sup>728</sup> Ligachev (1989), p. 197.

<sup>729</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 378-381, 423; Chernenko (1985), p. 11.

<sup>730</sup> Chernenko (1985), pp. 325-327.

<sup>731</sup> Chernenko (1985), p. 11; Gorbachev (2008a), pp. 515-520.

<sup>732</sup> Ligachev (1989), pp. 150-151; Ryzhkov (1986), p. 5.

<sup>733</sup> Ryzhkov (1986), p. 6.

transformed it through *decentralisation* and *democratisation* while keeping the concept of democratic centralism. Decentralisation included devolution of decision-making to lower levels where possible and democratisation, the inclusion of labour collectives to management, participation of enterprises in the planning process and socialist competition, development of multiple forms of ownership and thoroughgoing implementation of *khozraschet*, collective link system, cooperatives, individual labour activity and other innovative measures based on economic rationality, efficiency and profitability.<sup>734</sup>

It should be emphasised that all these measures were subsumed into the overarching agenda of *democratisation*. Due combination of central planning, market, decentralisation, and economic democracy is the keystone of neo-Leninist economic conception. *Central planning* was to set the priorities of socioeconomic development and basic directions of investment policy as well as scientific and technological progress. *Market* ceased to be seen as incompatible with socialism—market and commodity-money relations were recognised as a part of the socialist economy.<sup>735</sup> Market was supposed to become one of the main instruments of democratisation of the economy and satisfying people's needs.<sup>736</sup> The scope of marketisation gradually widened but it focused especially on the field of wholesale trade with means of production to eliminate the monopolist position of producers to the detriment of consumers and consumer market of goods and services.<sup>737</sup> Implementation of market mechanisms was intertwined with reform of the price system. The latter could not have limited itself only to quantitative adjustments, that is, an increase in prices, but required a qualitative change entailing their partial liberalisation and search for due combination of fixed and free prices.<sup>738</sup> This marketisation process was instrumental in instituting new forms or reviving older forms of economic activities, especially cooperatives, farming and individual labour activity.

Both neo-Leninist and liberal socialists were strong adherents of the *cooperative* movement which was marginalised after Lenin's death and preserved only in the form of *kolkhozy*. Cooperatives were considered a democratic form of social organisation of production and labour, which coincided with the need for building them on a market basis. Ryzhkov declared that the essence of cooperative movement is “democracy in everything”, which helps us to explain

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<sup>734</sup> Gorbachev (2008g), p. 162; Ligachev (1989), p. 125; Ryzhkov (1987a), pp. 19-21; Ryzhkov (1987b), pp. 35-36.

<sup>735</sup> Ligachev (1989), p. 282.

<sup>736</sup> Gorbachev (2008g), pp. 158-169.

<sup>737</sup> Ryzhkov (1987b), p. 40; Ryzhkov (1988), p. 19.

<sup>738</sup> Gorbachev (2008g), p. 170; Ryzhkov (1988), p. 22.

the liberal legal regulation contrasting with stricter rules for enterprises.<sup>739</sup> The development of cooperatives corresponded with a stress on kolkhozy and “kolkhoz democracy” which was to return the cooperative essence to them.<sup>740</sup> Similarly, the institute of *lease* of land, which existed until the late 1920s, was revived and rural private plots became supported to a much higher degree than before.<sup>741</sup> Democratisation of economic mechanisms was supportive of *pluralism of ownership forms* whose coexistence was seen as fully legitimate and contributory to socioeconomic development. The mistrust of private ownership, nevertheless, preserved within neo-Leninism, for it was connected with the Marxist conception of exploitation. Despite that, quasi-private institutes such as long-term lease became an integral part of the discourse. All these instruments were, at the same time, inseparable from the imperatives of social justice and state guarantees as well as political stability.<sup>742</sup>

### 5.2.3 *External model*

The neo-Leninist model of foreign policy was largely built on neo-Stalinism. Yet some basic concepts were new and these influenced the content of individual elements of the discourse. The fundamental task of the Soviet foreign policy was defined as creating favourable external conditions for the perfection of socialism and transition to Communism along with eliminating the threat of world war and contributing to universal security.<sup>743</sup> The idea of export of socialist revolution was abandoned. The country was to play a crucial role in global affairs but primarily through its internal socioeconomic development and achievements and economic instruments.<sup>744</sup> The strong focus on internal development was, nonetheless, accompanied by the imperative of containment of counterrevolution and imperialism where possible.<sup>745</sup> This grand strategy was primarily based on political means and peaceful coexistence and competition with capitalism.<sup>746</sup>

The leaders believed that the position of socialism worldwide was on the rise, especially after the colonial system collapsed, and the general crisis of capitalism was deepening. The discourse criticised capitalist societies for their individualism, amoralism, repression, and lack of

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<sup>739</sup> Ryzhkov (1988), pp. 4, 19.

<sup>740</sup> Ryzhkov (1988), p. 30.

<sup>741</sup> Ryzhkov (1988), pp. 30, 35; Ligachev (1989), pp. 198-199, 287.

<sup>742</sup> Ligachev (1989), p. 283.

<sup>743</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 170.

<sup>744</sup> Gorbachev (2008b), p. 102; Gromyko (1984), p. 530.

<sup>745</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 176.

<sup>746</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 485.

democracy while pointing to the rise of transnational monopolist capitalism, growing contradictions between corporations and nation-states as well as intensifying contradictions related to the rise of new centres such as Japan and Western Europe within the imperialist world system itself.<sup>747</sup> Irrespective of the fall of colonialism and alleged general crisis of capitalism, the neo-Leninism discourse continued to address imperialism, neocolonialism, militarism and class struggle at the international level, resorting to explicit anti-Western rhetoric including Gorbachev himself. The latter lambasted the American hegemonism and neocolonial exploitation while blaming the West for starting the Cold War, dividing Europe, and waging a psychological war against the Soviet Union and Communism.<sup>748</sup> The same attitude was vocalised by Iakovlev who accused Washington of “nuclear terrorism” and argued that the Cold War was a comprehensive international operation aimed at expanding the U.S. influence worldwide, dominating Western Europe, hindering the economic development of the USSR and undermining the pan-European process emerging from Helsinki Accords.<sup>749</sup>

Future prominent representative of liberal socialism asserted that Washington’s strategy was based on confrontation both in relation to adversaries and allies and accused the Americans of occupying Western Europe, Japan, and other countries.<sup>750</sup> Shevardnadze, in turn, assailed the Western doctrine of “neoglobalism”, the export of counterrevolution, interference in internal affairs and aggression against other countries.<sup>751</sup> Gorbachev even used the notion of “state terrorism” to describe the U.S. foreign policy.<sup>752</sup> This narrative remained an integral part of the official discourse until 1988. Even in that year, the general secretary criticised the Western militarism.<sup>753</sup> Even though neo-Leninism mitigated the importance of class struggle and paid stronger attention to a supraclass perspective, peaceful coexistence, cooperation and interdependence, the class approach was not abandoned. Gorbachev insisted that class antagonisms did exist and affect the external behaviour of individual countries.<sup>754</sup> The concept of class struggle was applied both to international relations and the internal dynamics of Western societies. From this perspective, peaceful coexistence continued to be perceived as a form of

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<sup>747</sup> *Materialy* (1986), pp. 13-15; Shevardnadze (1985), p. 3.

<sup>748</sup> *Materialy* (1986), p. 18; Gorbachev (1987), p. 202; Gorbachev (2008b), p. 104.

<sup>749</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 108, 136-142.

<sup>750</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 74-75.

<sup>751</sup> Shevardnadze (1986b), p. 27.

<sup>752</sup> Gorbachev (2008d), p. 57.

<sup>753</sup> Gorbachev (2009b), p. 359.

<sup>754</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 152.

class struggle.<sup>755</sup> This attitude had implications on economic policies because access to foreign capital to the Soviet market and opening up strategy as such aroused concerns about possible penetration by imperialist influence. By the same token, Gromyko perceived the export of capital as an important instrument of neocolonialism.<sup>756</sup>

The neo-Leninist discourse preserved the notion of a contradictory nature of relations between socialism and capitalism and drew on Lenin's theory of imperialism, hence the stress on anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, national liberation movement as well as the ICM. The latter was seen as the avantgarde of the international proletariat that was the leading revolutionary class.<sup>757</sup> The discourse advocated the establishment of a *new international economic order* to be based on equity, democracy and the central role of the UN and international law. It presupposed the elimination of all forms of discrimination in international relations including blockades and sanctions, collective handling of the problem of indebtedness, multilateralism, and inclusivity.<sup>758</sup> Nevertheless, the aim was not limited to global economic relations, for it envisaged a perestroika of international relations and a new global political philosophy.<sup>759</sup> This global perspective was reflected in the idea that a success of Soviet perestroika would help the developing countries to modernise themselves and avoid both capitalism and neocolonialism.<sup>760</sup> Soviet leaders, therefore, tended to make the Soviet reform and modernisation a pattern for other countries to follow.

Apart from the stress on the Third World and anti-imperialism, neo-Leninism adopted the conception of the *socialist commonwealth* as a backbone of Soviet external power and socialist internationalism as its conceptual basis. *Socialist internationalism* was defined as a new type of international relations based on ideological unity, shared goals, and comradely cooperation paired with respect to the interests, peculiarities, and traditions of each country. Unlike the past, neo-Leninism accentuated economic integration and economic rather than political and administrative instruments of managing the commonwealth.<sup>761</sup> The latter was to become more integrated internally and open externally inclusive of increasing cooperation with China and Western Europe. The socialist commonwealth was to increasingly participate in the international

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<sup>755</sup> Ligachev (1989), p. 91.

<sup>756</sup> Gromyko (1984), p. 583.

<sup>757</sup> *Materialy* (1986), pp. 8, 133.

<sup>758</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 146; *Materialy* (1986), pp. 74-75; Ryzhkov (1987a), p. 28.

<sup>759</sup> Shevardnadze (1986a), p. 21; Shevardnadze (1986b), p. 20.

<sup>760</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 133.

<sup>761</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 395-396.

division of labour.<sup>762</sup> The pivot from military anti-imperialism towards political, economic, and cultural competition and cooperation was an important dimension of neo-Leninism despite its concurrent insistence on anti-imperialism and active countering Western, and particularly American, influence. The competition between both camps and socioeconomic models was to occur within peaceful coexistence only for the neo-Leninist discourse recognised *peace* as the highest value shared by the entire mankind.<sup>763</sup> It created foundations both for *détente* and the new political thinking. *Détente* with its strategic military parity and security for the Soviet allies was appreciated as a great achievement of the Brezhnevite leadership. The blame for its destruction at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s was laid on the U.S.<sup>764</sup> Neo-Leninism advocated the revival of *détente* as a process of opening up, stronger international glasnost' and mutual understanding.<sup>765</sup>

Nevertheless, the concept of *détente* became secondary to that of the *new (political) thinking*. The latter's central point was the priority of panhuman values and the idea of growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the world irrespective of the existence of mutually incompatible socioeconomic systems and the existence of imperialism as well as class struggle. The new thinking included a conception of a new international order with the right of any country to choose an own development path in its core.<sup>766</sup> The central notion of new thinking formed a chain of equivalence with such concepts as *balance of interests*, *indivisible security* and *reasonable military sufficiency*. Balance of interests was meant to replace the hard geopolitical and largely military-based balance of power to create wider opportunities for cooperative relations and win-win solutions.<sup>767</sup> It coincided with the idea of equal, indivisible and shared security and a turn to a strictly defensive character of military doctrines based on reasonable military sufficiency. In this line of reasoning, Gorbachev could have argued that security must have been universal and inclusive of all countries and a comprehensive system of shared security, excluding any attempts at military superiority, was to be established.<sup>768</sup> Such a perspective was not in contradiction with *détente*, for it envisaged disarmament and gradual trust-building measures as a process based upon the strategic parity to avoid the risk of one

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<sup>762</sup> Andropov (1984), pp. 383-384; Ryzhkov (1987a), p. 28.

<sup>763</sup> Ligachev (1989), pp. 161-163.

<sup>764</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 144-146; Shevardnadze (1986a), p. 29.

<sup>765</sup> Shevardnadze (1986b), p. 19.

<sup>766</sup> Gorbachev (2009b), pp. 271, 364-365.

<sup>767</sup> Gorbachev (2009b), p. 362.

<sup>768</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 64-65, 74, 145.

side's dominance.<sup>769</sup> At the same time, the new thinking and stress on mutual security did not equal pacifism, giving up country's interests and marginalisation of defence capabilities and industry.<sup>770</sup>

Neo-Leninist discourse was inherently omnidirectional, which emerged from both civilisational and political reasons. The Soviet leaders argued that the centre of global development was moving from the West to Asia-Pacific. The Soviet Union was described as both European and Asian country, which facilitated its pivot to the East. Gorbachev repeatedly emphasised that Moscow was to deepen relations with such countries as China, India, and Japan.<sup>771</sup> This assertion used to be accompanied by geopolitical considerations about the need to prevent other major powers from interfering in the affairs of Asia-Pacific countries. The general secretary also addressed the economic potential of Siberia and the Soviet Far East, which was considered much higher compared to that of the European part of the country. This potential was to be developed through close cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries inclusive of joint ventures.<sup>772</sup> The interpretation of the Soviet Union as a peculiar Eurasian entity coexisted with Westcentric perspectives on the country as an integral part of Europe and the concept of Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals" as a single historical and cultural unit which shared the heritage of Renaissance, Enlightenment and classical European philosophy.<sup>773</sup> This narrative was, nevertheless, of secondary importance in comparison with the former, being rather a rival interpretation emerging from liberal socialist counterdiscourse. Neo-Leninism did not deny the European vector and European component of the Soviet (Russian) civilisation but did not slide into Westernism, which was typical of liberal socialism, either. The concept of a common European house was fully compatible with the neo-Leninist external model and coexisted with similar conceptions used in other regions, particularly in Asia.

### 5.3 Liberal socialism

The liberal socialist discourse brought new concepts as well as different interpretations compared to neo-Leninist notions. The nodal point of perestroika was given an accent on political content to the detriment of the economic one. The discourse gradually set a completely new definition of socialism which ceased to be a socioeconomic formation while becoming a

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<sup>769</sup> Andropov (1984), p. 398.

<sup>770</sup> Gorbachev (2008c), p. 175.

<sup>771</sup> Gorbachev (2008d), pp. 320-321.

<sup>772</sup> Gorbachev (1987), pp. 187-191.

<sup>773</sup> Gorbachev (1987), p. 207.

predominantly normative idea. It was accompanied by a transition from positive to natural law, a new perspective on Soviet history, and acceptance of ideological and political pluralism.

### 5.3.1 *Political model*

The pivot to political reform was carried out at the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference. Even though neo-Leninism also included a political dimension and an extensive conception of democratisation, these were never superior to the economic programme. The 19<sup>th</sup> Conference unambiguously declared that a fundamental *reform of the political system* was the top priority and political reform was to give a new impetus to the economic one.<sup>774</sup> The one-sided orientation to the political aspects manifested itself in the fact that no resolution on economic issues was discussed and adopted in contrast to a wide array of resolutions dedicated to various political questions. The concept of *perestroika* pushed the notion of acceleration and perfection out of the mainstream while linking to the concept of *revival* or *rejuvenation* and *revolution*. These were used by neo-Leninism as well, but their position was considerably less prominent. From a liberal socialist perspective, perestroika was aimed at the *revival*, not *perfection of socialism*. It was framed as the *second socialist revolution*, as a revolution in economy, politics, spiritual life, and people's consciousness, as a *revolutionary rejuvenation* which gave birth to a *humane, democratic socialism*.<sup>775</sup> Perestroika as an *evolutionary revolution* was identified with *genuine, real humanism* and *democracy* and described as the first mass and peaceful social revolution in history.<sup>776</sup>

The main achievements of perestroika were seen in democracy and glasnost' and elimination of the "authoritarian-bureaucratic system".<sup>777</sup> The latter was considered the principal cause of the crisis. Nonetheless, the argumentation was not only economy-based but also included moral and civilisational dimensions. The "dictatorship" led to *alienation* of people from ownership and power as well as to injustice and lawlessness. Moreover, the old system isolated the country from "world civilisation", which tended to be identified with the developed Western countries, distorted socialism, undermined morality and panhuman values, and denied the idea of a man as an end in himself.<sup>778</sup> While neo-Leninism usually called the pre-perestroika model command-administrative system, the liberal socialist discourse replaced this largely neutral and descriptive

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<sup>774</sup> XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia (1988b), pp. 113-114.

<sup>775</sup> Gorbachev (2010c), pp. 14-15, 104.

<sup>776</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 410, 446; Gorbachev (2011b), p. 145.

<sup>777</sup> Gorbachev (2011b), p. 55; XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia (1988a), p. 19.

<sup>778</sup> Gorbachev (2010d), p. 107; *Materialy* (1990), pp. 77-78.

term with the term of *authoritarian-bureaucratic*, *totalitarian-bureaucratic* and *totalitarian Stalinist system* or *barracks Communism* whose anti-democratic and oppressive nature was put in contrast to perestroika's turn to humanism, democracy and social justice and the idea of *society of free citizens* or *open society* based on socialist values, genuine democracy, human rights, free elections, political pluralism, free thinking, glasnost' and absence of former "ideological dictate".<sup>779</sup> Unlike neo-Leninism, the liberal socialist discourse explained the emergence and development of phenomenon of Stalinism through the leader's subjective decisions and personality and not the objective socioeconomic conditions and political circumstances.<sup>780</sup> This approach was to preserve the idea of socialism against the background of historical *deformations*, terror and crimes ascribed to Stalinism. The latter was contrasted with both socialism and Marxism, which were related to European humanism.<sup>781</sup> Application of the concept of alienation consequently resulted in the assertion that socialism had not existed in the Soviet Union at all.<sup>782</sup> A more moderate perspective limited Soviet socialism to the initial, pre-Stalin period of Lenin's rule and the NEP. Both interpretations, nevertheless, strongly undermined the legitimacy of the status quo and the Communist Party and devalued previous achievements.

In late 1989, Gorbachev characterised perestroika as a long period of transition from authoritarian-bureaucratic system to a genuinely democratic and self-managing society. This period was also referred to as *developing socialism*. While referring to the founders of Marxism and Lenin, the liberal socialist discourse marginalised the concept and goal of Communism, mentioning it very rarely. The goal of development was depicted rather as a *socialist society of civilised cooperatives*. This notion replaced the monistic idea of a socialist society as a single factory, which was allegedly abandoned by Lenin soon after the October Revolution.<sup>783</sup> Besides that, special attention was paid to individuals and their development. Already the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference declared with allusion to Protagoras that man was a measure of all things. Rethinking of *socialist humanism* was an integral and crucial part of liberal socialism, for it entailed a shift to Western terminology and concepts, particularly as far as human rights and democracy were concerned.

The Communist leader started to speak about *parliamentary democracy* with a strict division of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, development of *civil society* and *rule of law*,

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<sup>779</sup> Gorbachev (2017), pp. 129-132; Iakovlev (1990), p. 314; *Materialy* (1990), p. 69.

<sup>780</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 380.

<sup>781</sup> Gorbachev (2011a), p. 366.

<sup>782</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), p. 415.

<sup>783</sup> Gorbachev (2010d), pp. 99, 106.

guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms inclusive of freedom of consciousness and religious belief.<sup>784</sup> Similarly, Iakovlev highlighted the central role of individuals, equality of opportunities, welfare state, economic freedom as a basis of democracy and market as the chief instrument of society's self-management.<sup>785</sup> An emphasis was put on *property* as a basis of *individual freedom* and rule of law which would secure an efficient regulation of life of state and society and provide citizens with an opportunity to autonomous development and behaviour inclusive of an access to property independent on the state.<sup>786</sup> A concept of *moral perfection* of a person and society appeared. It corresponded with the notion of moral nihilism that was attributed to the Stalinist system and put into contrast with the moral revival of liberal socialist perestroika.<sup>787</sup> Iakovlev often referred to "Leninist ideal of socialism" in this regard, connecting it with a "return to a Man".<sup>788</sup>

This humanist revolution was to materialise the *socialist idea*, that is, the *idea of freedom* which could be realised only within the "common development of civilisation", within the *world civilisation*.<sup>789</sup> The liberal socialist concept of socialism, therefore, revived a neo-Kantian interpretation according to which socialism was a regulatory *normative idea* and moral category rather than a socioeconomic formation between capitalism and Communism. Interestingly, this liberal socialist paradigm was developing next to Marxism in both its Bolshevik and Menshevik versions in the prerevolutionary Russia, subsequently being further elaborated in exile. Such authors as Sergei Gessen, Georgii Gurvich, and Bogdan Kistiakovskii merged socialist, liberal as well as conservative concepts and shared a perspective on socialism as a society based on rule of law, natural law, individual rights and freedoms, social rights, inclusivity, participatory democracy, economic democracy, genuine equality and humanism, dignity and recognition. There is a considerable affinity between Russian interwar liberal socialism and Soviet liberal socialist discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. Both paradigms put an emphasis on the individual (person), a shift from collectivism to individualist intersubjectivism, plurality of interests, primacy of panhuman interests and values, a moderate class approach, decentralisation and democratisation of economy, evolutionism, gradualism and reformism, aversion to power-based politics, spiritual perestroika and finally the revival of iusnaturalism.<sup>790</sup> Despite these

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<sup>784</sup> Gorbachev (2010d), pp. 117-118; *XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia* (1988a), pp. 51-52.

<sup>785</sup> Iakovlev (2008), pp. 451-453.

<sup>786</sup> Falin (1999b), pp. 238-243.

<sup>787</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 207, 313.

<sup>788</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 360.

<sup>789</sup> Gorbachev (2010d), p. 110; Gorbachev (2017), p. 137.

<sup>790</sup> Compare with Zemánek (2019; 2020).

commonalities, the Soviet liberal socialists did not refer to their Russian ideological predecessors but referred to Western authors and experience, which coincided with the discourse's Westernism. In this line of reasoning, socialism was described through the ideals of humanism, freedom, social justice, welfare, equality and fraternity, morality, spirituality, creativity of masses and genuine people's rule and self-government with different forms of ownership and self-regulatory economy.<sup>791</sup>

A central political concept of the liberal democratic discourse was *democracy*. It was defined as a condition, instrument, and end of perestroika, as a system of feedback, interconnections, and accountability in society.<sup>792</sup> Socialist democracy was to include a system of soviets, economic democracy as well as institutes of direct democracy. Revival of *soviets* as the crucial decision-making structure in all areas was emphasised. Soviets were considered the core of the country's political system.<sup>793</sup> Nevertheless, attitudes towards the Soviet democracy and the role of the Communist Party evolved within the liberal socialist discourse itself over time. At first, leaders insisted on monopartism with the ruling role of the CPSU. At the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference, this position was vocalised by Primakov who argued that monopartism had to be preserved to avoid damage to the reform process for the legalisation of other political parties would be supportive to nationalist and dogmatic forces.<sup>794</sup> This widely consensual opinion, which overlapped with neo-Leninism, was gradually abandoned. The transitional stage was typical of the idea of transfer of all power from the Party to soviets while safeguarding the existence of a single political party. The general secretary himself fluctuated between accepting multipartism and political pluralism and rejecting them while upholding the conception of *socialist pluralism of opinions* within monopartism.<sup>795</sup> The main functions of the CPSU were to be limited to the creative development of Marxism-Leninism, due cadre policy and setting the basic framework for internal and external policies and ideological as well as organisational work.<sup>796</sup>

This stance, nonetheless, turned out to be hardly defensible under specific historical circumstances, so the idea of *political pluralism* eventually became consensual within the liberal socialist discourse. The goal of the CPSU was to complete the institutional redesign of the political system and hand power over to soviets. The transition to multipartism was symbolised

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<sup>791</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), pp. 288-289; Gorbachev (2011b), p. 287; Iakovlev (1990), pp. 478-480.

<sup>792</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 293.

<sup>793</sup> XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia (1988a), p. 53; XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia (1988b), p. 137.

<sup>794</sup> XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia (1988b), p. 33.

<sup>795</sup> Gorbachev (2009f), pp. 85, 296, 346; Gorbachev (2010a), p. 431.

<sup>796</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), p. 270.

by the cancellation of the Article 6 of the Constitution. The new draft of a party programme, which was put forward in 1990, gave up democratic centralism and envisaged a transformation of the ruling party to a political party of a parliamentary type. The CPSU was defined as *a party of socialist choice and Communist perspective* which was to coexist and compete with other political subjects under the circumstances of deideologised state and pluralism of political parties, economic forms, values and interests and regulated market.<sup>797</sup> Gorbachev did not abandon the idea of an *avantgarde role* of the Communist Party entirely but this role was reformulated. The CPSU was to be a political, ideological, and moral avantgarde, but it would have to be achieved in a permanent political and social struggle in a pluralist environment.<sup>798</sup>

### 5.3.2 *Economic model*

In the economic area, liberal socialism shared many similarities with neo-Leninism. It applied to a positive attitude towards the socialist market, cooperatives, farming through leasing land, economic democracy, and overall decentralisation of economic processes and mechanisms. Unlike neo-Leninism, the liberal socialist discourse curtailed the use of such concepts as acceleration and perfection while emphasising *alienation* and *marketisation* of economy. Overall, the differences between both discourses were stronger in the political realm rather than the economic one, which opened opportunities for tactical cooperation between the respective political actors. One of the reasons of considerable similarity can be seen in liberal socialism's predominant focus on political reform and issues to the detriment of economic agenda and restructuring and the lack of an in-depth economic conception on the part of the general secretary.

In the centre of the liberal socialist perspective on the economy was *market*. The new socialist model was to be based on the combination of market and planning, different forms of ownership (including concerns and stock companies), plurality of interests, entrepreneurship, and supraclass cooperation. The monistic concept of socialism without internal contradictions was refused and replaced by a vision of *pluralist* and open environment with democratic economic relations, high labour productivity, individual and collective ownership instead of the the state one, demonopolised economic structure and management based on economic instead of administrative instruments. State control should have been limited to key industries—defence, energy, infrastructure, and transport.<sup>799</sup> Later on, the non-market sector was to be preserved only

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<sup>797</sup> Gorbachev (2011a), p. 283; *Materialy* (1990), pp. 74, 81, 95.

<sup>798</sup> Gorbachev (2010d), pp. 117-118.

<sup>799</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 204, 378-379; *Materialy* (1990), pp. 86-87.

in such fields which could have not been subject to commercial criteria, namely, defence, public health, education, science and culture.<sup>800</sup> Transition to a *market economy*, nevertheless, was not considered contradictory to socialism and the concept of capitalism preserved negative connotations.<sup>801</sup> Importantly, China's reform and opening up used to be a positive reference point at least until mid-1989 even though liberal socialists tended to argue that reforms in the Soviet Union would be more difficult due to longer experience with collectivism and suppression of individual initiative. The revival of the market was seen as a fundamental task in both cases.<sup>802</sup>

The discourse conceptualised the *market* as a neutral mechanism which had existed under different historical circumstances and could not have been reduced to capitalism. The implementation of the market in Soviet economy was not perceived as an end in itself but an instrument to boost people's initiative, make economic subjects independent, and reach a rational operation of the economic system and optimal use of resources. In other words, the market was an answer to the problem of labour productivity and efficiency.<sup>803</sup> Market was also defined as a basis of democracy and an instrument for realising free choices and preferences. From this point of view, democracy cannot exist without market and economic freedom.<sup>804</sup> It led to the conclusion that socialism without market was a utopia from which emerged that socialism had not existed in the Soviet Union at all.<sup>805</sup> Of course, such "historical nihilism" was unacceptable for neo-Leninism. The 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress declared that the advantages of market economy were obvious and the main point was to provide people with sufficient social guarantees under the market conditions. Bearing this in mind, the Party set the concept of *regulated market economy*, which coexisted and overlapped with those of *socially-oriented economy*, *mixed economy*, and *socialist market economy*.<sup>806</sup> The acceleration of socioeconomic development and progress was identified with the radicalisation of economic reform and the transition to a full-fledged socialist market.<sup>807</sup> The latter was sometimes described by the notion

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<sup>800</sup> Communication from the USSR (1990).

<sup>801</sup> Gorbachev (2013b), p. 419; *Materialy* (1990), pp. 12-14.

<sup>802</sup> Falin (1999b), pp. 258-259.

<sup>803</sup> Gorbachev (2011c), pp. 151-152; Gorbachev (2017), p. 131.

<sup>804</sup> Iakovlev (1990), pp. 468-469.

<sup>805</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 341.

<sup>806</sup> *Materialy* (1990), p. 58; Gorbachev (2010a), p. 353; Gorbachev (2014), p. 99; Gorbachev (2017), pp. 15-25.

<sup>807</sup> *Materialy* (1990), p. 12; Gorbachev (2010a), p. 353.

of *perfection of economic system*, even though to much a lesser degree than in the neo-Leninist discourse.<sup>808</sup>

At the same time, one cannot overlook a certain evolution of the discourse between 1988 and 1991 in response to radical socioeconomic changes and external factors. The general secretary himself admitted in late 1989 that his perspective on some economic issues was changing. It applied to the role of *private ownership* and *privatisation*. However, Gorbachev's economic leadership remained weak and conducive to the rise of populism, economic nationalism, and centrifugal tendencies as a whole, which corresponded with the aversion to the use of force and long-term hesitancy to use his own executive powers. At Gorbachev's meeting with prominent economists in March 1991, Medvedev addressed the influence of populism on decision-making and the consequent postponement of *price reform* as one of the main economic problems along with the absence of a *strong central political power*.<sup>809</sup> Abalkin, in turn, spoke in favour of the establishment of a single body specialised in economic reform in its entirety, including but not limited to, planning, fiscal policy, material and technological resources and management of agro-industrial complex.<sup>810</sup> Interestingly, such a body existed in China where National Development and Reform Commission was set up. By the same token, the prime minister repeatedly asked for the right to legislative initiative and extraordinary powers in the field of economic management and socio-cultural development.<sup>811</sup> It demonstrates that there was a consensus on the need for political management of economic reform and a system of due politico-economic governance between liberal socialists (including Abalkin, Falin, Iakovlev and Medvedev) and neo-Leninists in early 1990s.

The chain of equivalence of liberal socialist discourse in the socioeconomic field can be demonstrated in a document drafted for Gorbachev's meeting with the leaders of the G7 in London in July 1991. The document set the following priorities: (1) *democratisation* of all spheres of life including radical political and economic reforms with the aim to form a mixed economy based on rule of law and strong civil society; (2) *privatisation, price liberalisation, equality* of different forms of ownership inclusive of the private one; (3) *macroeconomic stabilisation* with a focus on money circulation, fiscal policy and country's external debt; (4) comprehensive *rural reform* including land reform with the right of economic subjects to choose a concrete form of

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<sup>808</sup> Gorbachev (2010d), p. 217.

<sup>809</sup> Gorbachev (2015a), pp. 461-462.

<sup>810</sup> Gorbachev (2015a), p. 443.

<sup>811</sup> Gorbachev (2015b), p. 468.

farming voluntarily; (5) *opening up* and liberalisation of trade and external economic relations; (6) *integration* into world economy presupposing convertibility of ruble, gradual accession to GATT, International Monetary Fund and World Bank as well as the integration with the European Economic Community as a basis for building united Europe.<sup>812</sup> Soviet leaders expected the establishment of basic market infrastructure by 1995.<sup>813</sup>

Despite a wide agreement on the economic programme between liberal socialists and neo-Leninists, the former largely adopted Western perspectives on socioeconomic development, counting on Western support and assistance with integration of the USSR into global structures, which made the discourse and individual actors excessively dependent on their Western counterparts. In this regard, liberal socialism was becoming closer to populist, nationalist, and neoliberal forces in contrast to neo-Leninism which tended toward a sceptical attitude towards the West.<sup>814</sup> The KGB Chairman Kriuchkov summarised this position at a closed meeting of the Supreme Soviet in June 1991 in the following way: Western countries asserted their interests and would not help Moscow all the more so that the West already approached the USSR as a second-rate power.<sup>815</sup>

### 5.3.3 *External model*

The liberal socialist discourse followed neo-Leninism in the external model in certain regards as well, but the overall conceptual framework differed considerably. The affinities can be demonstrated on foreign policy priorities presented by the general secretary at the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of People's Deputies. Gorbachev focused on *universal* and *equal security* for all members of the international community, *demilitarisation*, *democratisation*, and *humanisation* of international relations with the United Nations at the core. Nuclear weapons were to be eliminated and military arsenals reduced according to the principle of *reasonable sufficiency*. The programme claimed allegiance to peaceful and political solutions of conflicts, unacceptability of the use of force, and the crucial role of political dialogue based on a *balance of interests*. Finally, Soviet economy was to be integrated into the world economy on a win-win basis.<sup>816</sup> Nonetheless, the differences between neo-Leninist and liberal socialist perspectives on the external model outweighed similarities. Such concepts as anti-imperialism, anti-hegemonism, anti-colonialism, class

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<sup>812</sup> Gorbachev (2017), pp. 15-25.

<sup>813</sup> Communication from the USSR (1990).

<sup>814</sup> Gorbachev (2015b), p. 469.

<sup>815</sup> Kriuchkov (1996), pp. 387-392.

<sup>816</sup> Gorbachev (2010a), p. 366.

struggle, détente, peaceful coexistence, and socialist internationalism were put aside, being replaced with a focus on *integration, interdependence, cooperation and opening up*.

These were subsumed into the overarching notion of *new thinking*. The latter was defined as the idea of “universal and common historical destiny of mankind and the priority of panhuman values”, as a new Soviet *internationalism* which postulated a shared destiny of all countries and nations.<sup>817</sup> The liberal socialist new thinking envisaged a “panhuman International” based on genuine cooperation, comprehensive security and cooperation.<sup>818</sup> From this perspective, security could not have been built to the detriment of others and transition to a “free and democratic society” was inseparable from the integration of Soviet economy into world economy and Soviet society into “world civilisation”.<sup>819</sup> The discourse adopted the vision of a *new model of international relations*, a new global economic order and overall democratisation of international relations based on equal security, win-win cooperation, mutual respect, equal participation and just and equal conditions for any country to choose its own way of life, that is, a global transition to a peaceful world and harmony between competition and cooperation.<sup>820</sup>

The anti-Western rhetoric was mitigated and occurred only rarely. The 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference declared that peace was endangered by imperialist militarism and expressed solidarity with fighters against imperialism, racism, and reaction, but such statements were results of neo-Leninist influence and competition with liberal socialism rather than an inherent component of the latter.<sup>821</sup> Critical stances on the West were connected with persisting measures against the Soviet Union and slow progress in integrating the country into international economic structures. Western actors were sometimes accused of cold-war mentality and leanings towards militarism and confrontation.<sup>822</sup> Similarly, Washington was criticised for efforts to reach superiority, obstruction of democratisation of international relations, and opposition to the integration between Europe and the USSR.<sup>823</sup> This argumentation was accompanied by appeals to Western countries for their own perestroika and revolution in consciousness to overcome the bloc confrontation and elaborate new common ideas and norms.<sup>824</sup> In other words, perestroika was

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<sup>817</sup> Gorbachev (2010a), p. 526; Iakovlev (1990), p. 316; *Materialy* (1990), p. 62.

<sup>818</sup> Shevardnadze (1988), p. 4.

<sup>819</sup> Gorbachev (2009f), p. 174; *Materialy* (1990), p. 31.

<sup>820</sup> Gorbachev (2009e), p. 215; Iakovlev (1990), p. 408.

<sup>821</sup> XIX vsesoiuznaia konferentsiia (1988a), pp. 44-45.

<sup>822</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 444.

<sup>823</sup> Gorbachev (2009e), p. 485; Gorbachev (2011b), p. 302; Gorbachev (2015b), p. 57.

<sup>824</sup> Iakovlev (1990), p. 414.

conceptualised as a universal, global project rather than a revolutionary transformation of the Soviet Union only.

In this line of reasoning, the concept of the *common European house* and *Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals* became wider and emphasised the inclusion of the U.S. and Canada into it. The United States and the Soviet Union alike were seen as part of European civilisation. The idea of the peculiar Eurasian identity of the Soviet civilisation was abandoned in favour of the Westernist perspective on the country as an integral part of Europe and on the Soviets as Europeans. Europe and the West as a whole were identified with world civilisation, which made them superior compared to Soviet modernity. Not by coincidence, the latter ceased to be conceptualised as a civilisation and socialism as such was linked to European culture, philosophy, and politics instead.<sup>825</sup> As a result, Soviet perestroika was described in terms of a return to civilisation.<sup>826</sup> From this point of view, the changes in Central and Eastern Europe inclusive of the collapse of the socialist commonwealth were interpreted in a largely positive way. The discourse used this experience as an argument in favour of the need for a connection between socialism and democracy (hence democratic socialism) and asserted that the fall of Communist regimes was not a collapse of socialism but only “authoritarian-bureaucratic regimes”.<sup>827</sup> Needless to say, such an interpretation was in stark contrast to the neo-Leninist discourse and the Soviet historical memory.

From the liberal socialist vantage point, the collapse of the socialist commonwealth and revolutionary perestroika in the Soviet Union were supportive of the transition from peaceful coexistence towards global cooperation, common creativity, and universal civilisation free of violence and war. Giving a Nobel lecture in Oslo, the general secretary declared that his country wanted to be a part of “modern civilisation”, live in harmony with panhuman values and international law, abide by the rules of the game and bear shared responsibility for “common house”.<sup>828</sup> The Westernist paradigm overlapped with an emphasis on the role of Soviet Union as a forerunner of a “global perestroika” and a “new world order”. It shows that liberal socialism’s Westernism was accompanied by a kind of universalism and globalism which were to provide the country with a prominent, if not leading position in the international arena.

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<sup>825</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), pp. 158, 171; Iakovlev (1990), pp. 417, 457.

<sup>826</sup> Gorbachev (2011c), p. 111.

<sup>827</sup> Gorbachev (2011a), p. 60; *Materialy* (1990), p. 33.

<sup>828</sup> Gorbachev (2015b), pp. 167-174.

## 5.4 From neo-Leninism to populism

Hegemony of the liberal socialist discourse naturally entailed a rise of *pluralism* in a wide array of fields, which had been contained and countered by neo-Leninism at both the conceptual and political level. This pluralisation opened doors to ideological and political *competition* between discourses as well as mutual contamination between and influence on each other to a higher degree than before. Neo-Leninism remained an influential discourse despite the loss of political superiority. And irrespective of the substantial differences between neo-Leninism and liberal socialism, there were a number of points of conjunction, which enabled tactical cooperation in some areas, especially economy and foreign policy.

Ligachev, as a prominent representative of neo-Leninism, was supportive of the democratisation agenda and the related fight against bureaucratism and “conservatism”. He endorsed further delimitation between party and state bodies and freeing the party of excessive power in economic and other areas.<sup>829</sup> Notwithstanding his push to accelerate political reforms, Gorbachev, in turn, increasingly highlighted the need for stability, law and order. This security-based discourse was shared by both neo-Leninists and liberal socialists to a certain degree from 1989 on. The general secretary addressed the problem of attacks against the CPSU and the Soviet system by “extremists” and both conservative and leftist actors who often adhered to openly anti-socialist policies.<sup>830</sup> Gorbachev declared repeatedly that violations of state and labour discipline would not be tolerated, order had to be restored everywhere and extraordinary measures in the economy had to be introduced.<sup>831</sup> Similarly, Abalkin admitted that the central bodies were increasingly weak, which contributed to rising mistrust of the CPSU, Supreme Soviet and government alike.<sup>832</sup> However, such statements were concurrently relativised by the leader’s obvious aversion to the use of force as well as negative remarks about widespread leanings toward strong power and “cult of order”.<sup>833</sup> In any case, the supreme Soviet representative resorted to both discourses in his words and deeds, which characterised the whole post-1988 period, symbolising the growing disunity in the political leadership and clashes between discourses.

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<sup>829</sup> Ligachev (1989), pp. 282-284.

<sup>830</sup> Gorbachev (2009f), pp. 99, 115; Gorbachev (2010c), p. 14.

<sup>831</sup> Gorbachev (2010c), pp. 16-17.

<sup>832</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), p. 501.

<sup>833</sup> Gorbachev (2011a), p. 31.

Records from Politburo sessions show that neo-Leninism and liberal socialism coexisted and competed at the highest political level. Neo-Leninist actors pushed ahead security-based narratives while accepting certain liberal socialist economic ideas and rethinking some democratisation policies which had been implemented earlier. The overall situation was depicted as a general crisis which had to be overcome by both ordinary and extraordinary measures to restore stability, law and order even at the cost of the use of the armed forces. While emphasising the priority of economic reform instead of the political one, neo-Leninist actors revised attitudes towards some former neo-Leninist policies, including but not limited to, the implementation of economic democracy, that is, election of management by labour collectives. A formalist attitude towards the acceleration strategy and premature dissolution of existing mechanisms of economic management before a new legal and economic framework was formed became commonplace.<sup>834</sup> Furthermore, negative aspects of the role of media were addressed, inclusive of censorship of party representatives by some media.<sup>835</sup> This perspective on the country's development was largely presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress.

The abovementioned security-based narrative, which was advocated by such actors as Ryzhkov, Ligachev, and Vorotnikov at Politburo sessions throughout 1989, lived to see considerably wider support and further elaboration at that event. From the neo-Leninist perspective, the leading role of the Communist Party was to be revived, democratic centralism strengthened, and the Secretariat restored as a central standing body. Perestroika was conceptualised as a strategy aimed to reveal the full potential of socialism, deliver sufficient material and spiritual benefits to the people, and provide them with real participation in the governance. Ligachev warned against departure from class attitudes and such an economic reform that would restore the dominance of private ownership.<sup>836</sup> Neo-Leninist actors spoke out strongly against anti-Communist forces, political and economic separatism, nationalism and unconstitutional actions on the part of republics while insisting on the preservation of a single market, financial system and other fundamentals of the Soviet state.<sup>837</sup> By that time, they not only reappraised a number of hitherto implemented neo-Leninist reform policies but also began to refer to the first years of reform as a "romantic" period during which the Party committed a serious mistake when creating an illusion that the reform process would be short and without side-effects.<sup>838</sup> By the same token, political

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<sup>834</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), p. 164.

<sup>835</sup> Gorbachev (2010b), pp. 503-507.

<sup>836</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), pp. 151-154; *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991b), pp. 8-9.

<sup>837</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), pp. 127-128; *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991b), pp. 10.

<sup>838</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), p. 511.

and economic reform had to be thought-out, gradual and systematic and democratisation controlled and limited. Implementation of market mechanisms was conceptually intertwined with the preservation of stable and strong state and political structures. The neo-Leninist discourse accepted the idea of a presidential system but insisted on the fusion of the presidential and party powers, which coincided with the overall orientation to the strong central power, stability, and manageability of the reform processes.<sup>839</sup>

It is worth noticing that Gorbachev opposed the idea of a strong presidency at first as he favoured the transition of power from the Communist Party to soviets with the Congress of People's Deputies at the top. Nevertheless, he eventually adopted the neo-Leninist security-based narrative about the need for a strong executive power. The general secretary had the ambition to use the presidential power to acceleration of perestroika while keeping it under control. In the second half of 1990 and in 1991, this motive played an important role in Gorbachev's statements. The leader spoke about the introduction of extraordinary measures to cope with the existing problems, suppress nationalism, extremism, and crime, overcome legal nihilism, and restore law and order while criticising some journalists for crossing the red line.<sup>840</sup> It could but arouse hopes among neo-Leninists that their discourse would be able to topple the liberal socialist hegemony all the more so that neo-Leninism enjoyed wide support among the members of the 27<sup>th</sup> Politburo—one can mention Viktor Chebrikov, Vladimir Kriuchkov, Egor Ligachev, Iurii Masliukov, Nikolai Ryzhkov and Vitalii Vorotnikov. Even though the 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress redrew the composition of the highest party body, which did not include any of the leading figures of the neo-Leninist discourse, the impact of this fact was mitigated by the slump in the role of Politburo and the CPSU as a whole in the political process. The centre of political gravity moved to the presidential administration and many functions of Politburo were taken over by the Security Council. And the latter was largely controlled by neo-Leninist actors such as Gennadii Ianaev, Valentin Pavlov, Vladimir Kriuchkov, Boris Pugo, and Dmitrii Iazov.

At the same time, the general secretary's "strategic ambiguity" enabled the populist and nationalist discourse to expand. I tend to interpret populism as a second-order discourse, since it largely parasitised on the hegemonic discourse. Therefore, it did not evolve into an independent, comprehensive discourse such as neo-Stalinism, neo-Leninism, and liberal socialism, and its conceptual structure changed over time. Let us demonstrate this feature on a

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<sup>839</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), pp. 169-173, 195-198.

<sup>840</sup> Gorbachev (2011a), p. 335; Gorbachev (2011b), pp. 56-61; Gorbachev (2013a), p. 73; Gorbachev (2013b), p. 245.

couple of examples. By the time of the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress, one can speak about a kind of “Communist populism”. Boris El'tsin as Moscow's first secretary and Politburo candidate promoted radical reforms and attacked the party apparatus while calling for transparency, supervision, control, and discipline. He used to present himself as an advocate of the working class and its interests against the privileged party bureaucracy and officials.<sup>841</sup> El'tsin's early Communist populism based on anti-elitism and radicalism subsequently turned into a populism based on a mixture of nationalist, liberal socialist and neoliberal concepts.

At the 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress, El'tsin, as the leader of Russian nationalism, spoke in favour of a radical transformation of the CPSU and the politico-economic system in the country. The Party was to change its name and give up Marxism-Leninism, change the leadership, allow factions, and dissolve party organisations in all state institutions and possibly in enterprises as well. The discourse included the idea of a multiparty political system, a fight against “conservatism” and a heterogeneous mix of neoliberal economic and socially-oriented policies, which made it self-contradictory.<sup>842</sup> It reflected a variety of different political, economic and social interests of actors who embraced the discourse as an instrument of undermining the union's centre and spreading anti-Communist policies.<sup>843</sup> The populist discourse, nevertheless, remained secondary until the failure of the August coup. The concurrent defeat of neo-Leninism and the fatal debilitation of liberal socialism enabled populism to establish hegemony, which resulted in the elimination of the Communist Party and neoliberal transformation of the country.

## 5.5 Findings

The discourse analysis identified three hegemonic discourses in Soviet politics between 1978 and 1991. The analysis was focused on the principal nodal point, that is, *socialism*, and its content in the political, economic and external realms. Comparisons between individual discourses revealed both similarities and differences. Conceptual chains of equivalence, in turn, enabled me to identify the content of individual elements, the field of discursivity, strategies of legitimisation and objectivisation, continuities, and discontinuities. This method is crucial for a discursive explanation of acceptance or, on the contrary, rejection of Dengism by Soviet leaders.

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<sup>841</sup> *XXVII s"ezd* (1986a), pp. 142-144. This strategy of anti-elitism and idealisation of the people along with social justice are usually considered typical features of political populism. See Abromeit, Chesterton, Marotta & Norman (2016).

<sup>842</sup> *XXVIII s"ezd* (1991a), pp. 472-475.

<sup>843</sup> See Lukin (2005).

*Neo-Stalinism* corresponded with Dengism in the political field, final goal, and civilisational embeddedness. The discourse insisted on monopartism and defined socialist democracy through the leading role of the Communist Party while enabling discussions about glasnost', expansion of the role of soviets, and negative aspects of bureaucracy. The concept of developed or real socialism was accompanied by the idea of peculiar Soviet (socialist) civilisation and permanent perfection, which was aimed at the gradual transition to Communism. Unlike Dengism, neo-Stalinism presented itself in universalist terms as a model for every country at the same stage of development. This universalism corresponded to the notion of socialist internationalism, which envisaged a hierarchical structure of the socialist commonwealth, as well as the International Communist Movement. Neo-Stalinist perspective on international relations through the prism of a struggle between two antagonist systems undermined the concurrent efforts for peaceful coexistence and détente. A strong position on anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and class nature of international relations complicated cooperation with capitalist countries, coinciding with the priority of political considerations and ideological orthodoxy over economic development. It delegitimised substantial reforms and obstructed further development. Insistence on Stalinist economic model and its principles excluded any conception of mixed economy and implementation of market and individual ownership. It follows that neo-Stalinism was largely incompatible with Dengism and, therefore, Soviet representatives could have hardly followed the Chinese reform pattern.

The *neo-Leninist* discourse was quite contrary in this regard, for it evinced a high degree of congruence with Dengism in all basic categories. In political terms, the discourse preserved the notion of developed socialism at first but in a less dogmatic way. Moreover, it was soon replaced with the concept of developing socialism, while perfection ceased to be related to developed socialism, being substituted with socialism only. It opened the door to the creative rethinking of socialism itself and considerable changes in the content of this sign. New chains of equivalence were established, including, but not limited, to people's vital creativity, activation of the human factor, acceleration of socioeconomic development, social justice, and socialist pluralism of opinions, interests and needs. Socialism was given a new impetus through overall dynamisation, pluralisation, and quite wide democratisation which applied to intraparty operation, delineation between party and state bodies, autonomy of soviets but also the economic realm, for instance, economic democracy in enterprises, autonomy of economic subjects (full khoraschet), rural reform (lease of land), development of cooperatives, and individual labour activity. Importantly, neo-Leninism insisted on preserving the ruling role of the Communist Party and limited political reform. Despite an emphasis on democratisation and interest in political perestroika, priority was

given to economy, economic development, and reform. The latter was conceptualised through the concepts of acceleration, perestroika, and perfection, entailing a radical and comprehensive reform and qualitative update based on due combination of central planning, market, decentralisation, economic democracy, and pluralism of ownership forms with the only exception of private ownership which preserved negative connotations linked to the problem of exploitation.

In external terms, neo-Leninism followed neo-Stalinist anti-imperialist, and class approaches as well as the idea of peaceful coexistence, perestroika of international relations, socialist internationalism, socialist commonwealth, and ICM. Despite these affinities and continuities between both discourses, the neo-Leninist perspective on the external model was based on a pivot from military anti-imperialism towards political, economic, and cultural competition and cooperation with capitalist countries with peace as a universal, supraclass value in the centre. Stress was put on the revival of détente and opening up, stronger international glasnost' and understanding. Neo-Leninism introduced a concept of new political thinking which postulated the priority of panhuman values and the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the world irrespective of the existence of mutually incompatible socioeconomic systems and the existence of imperialism as well as class struggle. This perspective gave birth to notions such as balance of interests, indivisible security, and reasonable military sufficiency. This revision was aimed at creating peaceful external conditions for internal socioeconomic development, reform, and gradual transition to Communism, accompanied by an emphasis on economic aspects of integration between socialist countries and pragmatic interaction with capitalist countries. The discourse was supportive of a multivector foreign policy, which coincided with the perception of the country as a peculiar Eurasian entity with a specific socialist civilisation and Soviet modernity whose universalist aspects were mitigated compared to the neo-Stalinist notion. The discourse analysis shows that *neo-Leninism can be interpreted as a Soviet analogue of Dengism*. Based on this observation, one can conclude that it was the neo-Leninist discourse that might have implemented the Chinese reform model in the Soviet Union.

*Liberal socialism* brought substantial changes compared to neo-Leninism and neo-Stalinism. To a certain extent, continuity with neo-Leninism was limited to the economic and external models, whereas other categories were filled with divergent content. Naturally, it had serious implications for the potential to follow Dengism. The liberal socialist discourse set the priority of politics and political reform. The goal of socioeconomic development was not Communism anymore, but rather a socialist society of civilised cooperatives which overlapped with the notions of humane and democratic socialism, society of free citizens, and open society. The Soviet past was rejected

and described as an authoritarian-bureaucratic and totalitarian system, which had nothing in common with socialism. The latter was identified with a normative idea and a moral category. “Historical nihilism” was accompanied by strong moralism that defined a man as a measure of all things and emphasised moral perfection. Revolutionary perestroika was related to concepts such as parliamentary democracy, civil society, the rule of law, and human rights. These presupposed the implementation of political pluralism, that is, a multiparty model. At the same time, a concurrent emphasis on economic democracy, institutes of direct democracy, and the central role of soviets differentiated the model from Western liberal democracy.

In the economic realm, the discourse envisaged a far-reaching transformation with a regulated market economy as the goal. The latter was also conceptualised as socially-oriented, mixed and socialist market economy. It followed most neo-Leninist economic concepts, but supplemented them with new ones. The liberal socialist discourse further weakened the role of planning and advocated privatisation and private ownership, thus widening the scope for private entrepreneurship. At the same time, there was a consensus on the need for political management of economic reform and a system of due politico-economic governance between both discourses. Similarly, the external model adopted older notions of universal security, demilitarisation, democratisation of international relations, reasonable sufficiency, balance of interests, and new political thinking. However, liberal socialism reformulated the latter, making it a universal and globalist pattern, which gave up the Eurasian identity and strong particularism in favour of a vision of a new internationalism, panhuman interests, and world civilisation which was largely identified with the Western modernity. The idea of peaceful coexistence was abandoned as was the class struggle. Peaceful cooperation and related economic, ideological and political struggle between socialism and capitalism was replaced with global cooperation, common creativity, and a vision of global perestroika. The imperative of openness and engagement with capitalist countries undermined the weight and relevance of Soviet national interests and led to the abandonment of strategic parity with Western countries.

Internally, the liberal socialist discourse entailed pluralisation of the order of discourse and intensifying clashes between rival discourses. Even though liberal socialism and neo-Leninism remained the most relevant, they eventually succumbed to the nationalist-populist discourse. Overall, liberal socialism moved away from Dengism compared to neo-Leninism. The points of conjunction can be found in the economic and external model, which was, however, insufficient for adopting the Chinese reform pattern. Mutual divergencies and animosities were amplified by the priority of politics and moralism of liberal socialism over the economy. These made both discourses incompatible in the upshot.

## 6 Socialism and reforms in China and the Soviet Union

Whereas the previous chapter carried out the discourse analysis, the present one focuses on a politico-economic analysis of socialism and reforms in China and the Soviet Union since the beginning of reform processes. China's reform and opening up is inquired into to the extent that is necessary for the main topic, that is, developments in the Soviet Union, thus creating a background against which the Soviet perestroika is analysed. Attention is paid to reform patterns from Stalin's death to the late Brezhnevite period and subsequently to the neo-Leninist and liberal socialist perestroika at the level of economy, politics and foreign policy. These areas correspond to the method in the preceding chapter. Hence, extensive historical research is embedded in the discursive framework and demonstrates the material effects of individual discourses. It creates a comprehensive picture of the Soviet leadership's relations to Dengism and enables me to formulate an explanation of the acceptance or rejection of the Chinese reform model at the political and institutional levels.

### 6.1 China's reform and opening up

Mao Zedong died in 1976 amidst a deep disillusionment with the radicalism, excesses, and violence of the leftist course of the Cultural Revolution. The intermezzo between Mao's death and ground-breaking 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee in December 1978, which marked a turn to comprehensive economic reforms, was, nevertheless, full of paradoxes and the country remained under a strong influence of the radical left.

#### 6.1.1 *In quest of a new model of socialism*

The 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1977 reaffirmed the Stalinist concept of the intensification of the class struggle under socialism as well as Maoist role of leaps and cultural revolution in the construction of socialism. A year later, the National People's Congress approved an economic programme accentuating heavy industry and marginalising market elements.<sup>844</sup> Similarly, Mao's heritage was unchallenged and the only question was how to follow and interpret Mao Zedong Thought after Helmsman's death. The political elite was aware of the eminent importance of ideology for the existence and development of the Communist regime and took the rethinking of socialism very seriously. Such an attitude had its cultural and historical reasons. Sun argues that the

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<sup>844</sup> Bakešová, Kučera & Lavička (2019), pp. 156-158.

significance of ideas for political action in China emerged from both the traditional Confucian emphasis on doctrine and Maoist legacy of ideological purity and repetitive rectification. The unity of knowledge and power, theory and practice were a typical feature of imperial as well as revolutionary China, and the task to revisit socialism and Mao Zedong Thought, therefore, emerged as a quite natural consequence of this tradition.<sup>845</sup>

The first serious debate in the post-Mao China was a fundamental polemic about the criterion of truth—or *two whatevers*. Premier and CPC Chairman Hua Guofeng interpreted Mao Zedong Thought in conservative terms and summarised the new position as follows: “Whatever policies Mao has made, we will resolutely safeguard and whatever instructions Mao has given we will forever follow.” This leftist political line would thus have entailed the intensification of class struggle, Great Leap Forward strategy, and Dazhai model in economy. Whereas Hua’s faction defined truth qua congruence with *theory* (Maoism), Deng’s faction set *practice* as the sole criterion of truth.<sup>846</sup> Deng skilfully revived Mao’s slogan on “seeking truth from facts” that was originally formulated in Yan’an period during World War II and used it for rethinking the ruling ideology.<sup>847</sup> It was Deng who managed to push his innovative policies through at the end of 1978.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenum became the beginning of the reform course based upon *Four Modernisations* and *Four Cardinal Principles*. The former was formulated by Premier Zhou Enlai back in 1963 and envisaged the contours of development in the field of agriculture, industry, defence, and science and technology.<sup>848</sup> The latter demarcated the areas of possible revision and adjustments, thus keeping the reforms under control through adherence to the socialist path, people’s democratic dictatorship, leadership of the CPC as well as Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. The combination of innovation and restraint enabled to pursue transformation while suppressing antisocialist actors and developments together with excessive liberalisation.<sup>849</sup> The reform line was based on the priority of economic development and productive forces to the detriment of class struggle and relations of production, putting economy instead of ideology first.<sup>850</sup> In conceptualising the goals of Chinese modernisation, Deng resorted to a Confucian concept of *xiaokang*, that is, a moderately prosperous society with middle class as its backbone. The new leaders not only could have distinguished between capitalism and market, which enabled them

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<sup>845</sup> Sun (1995b), p. 18.

<sup>846</sup> Sun (1995b), pp. 22-23.

<sup>847</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 328.

<sup>848</sup> Marsh (2005), p. 38.

<sup>849</sup> Sun (1995a), p. 335.

<sup>850</sup> Deng (1985), p. 4.

to gradually elaborate the idea of a socialist market economy, but also introduce material incentives as the principal instrument of economic and labour motivation.<sup>851</sup> This policy was symbolised by the slogan “Let some get rich first” which must have sounded heretically to the leftist Communists. Deng was aware of the serious economic problems and weaknesses caused by Maoist policies and considered the overall economic development *conditio sine qua non* for the construction of socialism. Maoism succeeded in enhancing the relations of production along the line of socialisation, however, it failed to reach a proportional development of productive forces. From this observation did Deng conclude that the relations had to be brought down to lower levels at first.<sup>852</sup> Indeed, such an argumentation could have raised the spectre of the restoration of capitalism.

Aside from the conceptual and economic revision, the Chinese reform and opening up encompassed political restructuring and democratisation. The scope was, nevertheless, restricted by the Four Cardinal Principles. Deng spoke about democratisation and democracy as a precondition for the emancipation of mind and a sustainable economic transformation.<sup>853</sup> The new leadership could not have missed the assessment of the past out. But the Chinese attitude differed significantly from the negation of Stalinism by Khrushchev in the Soviet Union. The Chinese understood that such a radical revision would undermine the foundations of the system and trigger dangerous centrifugal tendencies. Therefore, the reformers used Mao’s own formula regarding Stalin’s legacy and declared that Mao had been 70 per cent right and 30 per cent wrong.<sup>854</sup> The *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China*, passed in 1981, reassessed both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, connecting the failures and flaws with subjective, not structural factors.<sup>855</sup> General Secretary Hu Yaobang admitted that the Party had misinterpreted the dictatorship of proletariat resorting to excessive repressions while failing to implement socialist democracy and guarantee economic development. Therefore, autocratic decision-making was to be replaced by genuine democratic centralism, rule of law and due cadre policy.<sup>856</sup>

Unlike Gorbachev and like-minded Soviet reformers, the Chinese did not embrace the idea of “deformed socialism”, which had to be replaced by a “socialism with a human face”, and thus

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<sup>851</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 365; Sun (1995b), p. 94.

<sup>852</sup> Sun (1995a), p. 326.

<sup>853</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), pp. 341-342; Sun (1995b), p. 39.

<sup>854</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 375.

<sup>855</sup> Resolution on Certain Questions (1981).

<sup>856</sup> Excerpts of Talks (1982a).

maintained the continuity and legitimacy of the Communist regime.<sup>857</sup> The risk of a slide into ideological indifference and what would be later called “historical nihilism” was to be prevented by thought-out ideological education and campaigns. In 1983, the campaign against “spiritual pollution” was launched in response to the increasingly unrestrained public and academic discourse which addressed such topics as alienation under socialism, humanism in general, and human rights in particular.<sup>858</sup> In 1986, the Party issued a resolution on spiritual civilisation that emphasised the significance of ideology for society, state, modernisation and development as well as the need for the protection of Chinese values and achievements of China’s modernisation. The normative act was followed by a campaign against “bourgeois liberalisation”.<sup>859</sup> These actions helped the CPC to contain liberalisation tendencies and suppress them in accordance with the Four Cardinal Principles. The risk of social discontent and unrest as by-products of the economic reforms were, in turn, mitigated by fighting corruption, which posed an acute problem. Between 1982 and 1991, up 1.78 million corruption cases were prosecuted and more than 1.26 million party members were punished.<sup>860</sup>

In order to explicate and justify the fundamental revision of both socialist theory and practice, when the latter included what some authors interpreted in terms of a “capitalist revolution” and “capitalism with Chinese characteristics” and what went far away from Maoism, the CPC adopted the concept of the primary stage of socialism at the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1987 after its development under the supervision of General Secretary Zhao Ziyang.<sup>861</sup> According to the Party’s leader, this stage was to last at least a hundred years during which the economic base inclusive of both productive forces and relations of production would be gradually developing to eventually create solid foundations of socialist society.<sup>862</sup> The reformers coined the term “socialism with Chinese characteristics” to highlight the innovative and specific reform path set by the CPC.<sup>863</sup> The conceptual road to the socialist market economy was, nevertheless, not speedy. Before being introduced at the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1992, the concept was substituted for “planned commodity economy” (1984) and “socialist commodity economy” (1988) respectively.<sup>864</sup> The

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<sup>857</sup> Sun (1994), p. 49.

<sup>858</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 387.

<sup>859</sup> Sun (1995b), pp. 208-209.

<sup>860</sup> Pei (1994), p. 69.

<sup>861</sup> Huang (2008).

<sup>862</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 404.

<sup>863</sup> Deng (1985), p. 35.

<sup>864</sup> Sun (1995b), pp. 69-83.

leadership thus managed to mitigate the opposition against the transformation, blunt antagonisms among feuding factions and retain the crucial notion of socialism.

The primacy of internal economic development required the revision of external policy. China's foreign policy underwent a substantial revision in the first half of the 1980s. Deng formulated a strategy aimed at promoting internal economic development and countering hegemonism for that decade.<sup>865</sup> In 1982, Premier of the State Council Zhao Ziyang defined the principles of foreign policy as follows: First, China is a Third World country and cooperates with other Third World countries to jointly promote a new economic order. China continues her fight against imperialism, hegemonism, colonialism, racial discrimination, and other forms of inequality. Second, the country pursues an independent, sovereign, and balanced foreign policy and considers the rivalry between the U.S. and the USSR the principal cause of conflicts and instability. Third, China seeks peace as a precondition of economic and cultural development of the country.<sup>866</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress, held in the same year, further developed these principles, making them more nuanced. It declared that the Soviet Union was not the major threat any more, so the idea of the global united front against Moscow became irrelevant and may have been abandoned. The Congress emphasised that China sought normal relations with other countries based upon peaceful coexistence inclusive of the restoration of relations with other Communist parties. The highest body of the CPC gave up the export of socialist revolution and the conception of military struggle and war as a legitimate form of struggle and inevitability of war and last but not least it claimed allegiance to the programme of disarmament.<sup>867</sup> The declaration of an independent foreign policy without any alliance could have been interpreted as a strong message to both Moscow and Washington.<sup>868</sup> As a follow-up to the conclusions approved by the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, the 1983 National People's Congress (NPC) formally recognised that the East European countries were building socialism and these were marked socialist again several months later.<sup>869</sup> Nonetheless, the recognition did not apply to the USSR yet.

The revision of PRC's foreign policy was interlinked both with internal shifts and changing external environment. The Soviet position weakened due to the invasion of Afghanistan, the end of détente, crisis in Poland as well as NATO's assertive behaviour in Europe. Washington's intervention in Grenada, the Able Archer exercise, and the deployment of the first Pershing

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<sup>865</sup> Shen (2020), p. 348.

<sup>866</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 257. See also Deng (1985), pp. 28-29.

<sup>867</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 258.

<sup>868</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 89; Dittmer (1992), p. 116.

<sup>869</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 270.

missiles in West Germany perturbed both Moscow and Beijing, whereas Brezhnev's abandonment of the first use of nuclear weapons in 1982 mitigated concerns among the Chinese and corresponded with China's new general line.<sup>870</sup> At the same time, Beijing became disillusioned with the U.S. military supplies to Taiwan and the Reagan administration's reluctance to provide China with high-tech and other economic benefits.<sup>871</sup> Vice President George Bush's mission to Beijing in 1982 which was used to the proposal of a joint struggle against the USSR by the American side could thus hardly proved successful.<sup>872</sup> Similarly, Reagan's ground-breaking visit to the PRC two years later failed to win the Chinese side over for the idea of bilateral strategic partnership, for Beijing was afraid that the latter would reduce the country's leverage and maneuvering space in the international politics.<sup>873</sup>

The United States together with the Soviet Union remained to be perceived as sources of hegemony in the early 1980s. The American imperialism was seen as the main hegemon compared to minor socialist hegemonism with the USSR on the top. From this point of view, the Soviet hegemonism undermined the world revolution and posed an obstacle to the victory of Communism.<sup>874</sup> Similarly, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian argued during his meeting with Gromyko in September 1984 that the rise in international tension in the 1980s was a result of the Soviet-American competition for superiority.<sup>875</sup> At the same time, both Zhao and Deng believed that mutual deterrence between the superpowers based on the threat of nuclear annihilation together with the decline of ideological confrontation between socialism and capitalism led to a long-term peaceful coexistence, growing economic interdependence including the gradual integration of socialist countries into the world market reduced the probability of a large-scale military confrontation and, finally, capitalism managed to innovate itself through scientific and technological progress, which revived the system and postponed its decline. Such a perspective is in stark contrast to both Stalinist outlook on the socioeconomic development after World War II and the leftist revolutionary character of Maoism.<sup>876</sup>

This conceptual revision enabled to deepen cooperation with developed capitalist countries, lift the heavy burden of military expenditures, and start a massive demilitarisation. Not by

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<sup>870</sup> Zubok (2009), pp. 274-275.

<sup>871</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 4.

<sup>872</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 268.

<sup>873</sup> Wishnick (2014), p. 87.

<sup>874</sup> Excerpts of Talks (1982b).

<sup>875</sup> Gromyko (2015), p. 224.

<sup>876</sup> Sun (1995b), p. 207.

coincidence, one of Deng's first moves upon taking power was the decrease in military spending. It sent a clear message that it was the Party which controlled the armed forces and military-industrial complex and not the opposite.<sup>877</sup> Deng believed that China was to be capable of protecting her security only through peace and economic power.<sup>878</sup> It turns out, paradoxically, that Mao's radical experiments counting the Cultural Revolution created suitable conditions for Dengist modernisation, for they bring about a popular demand for rightist reforms and weakened the power of particular interest groups as well as party and state apparatuses.

### 6.1.2 *Political reforms*

Post-Mao China suffered from the overconcentration of power, which was interconnected with the nature of the Maoist command economy. From Deng's point of view, economic transformation should have been accompanied by adjustments of the operation of both Party and state. Nevertheless, two aspects are especially relevant in this regard: political reforms were to be limited and the party leaders did not have a clear and comprehensive blueprint in mind. The short-term programme was put forward in Deng's speech *On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership* delivered to the Politburo in 1980.<sup>879</sup> Between 1980 and 1982, the life tenure of party and state leaders was abolished, the presidency was restored and the role of legislature as well as local bodies was strengthened.<sup>880</sup> Public discourse overcame its former boundaries and raised such topics as alienation, shortage of intraparty democracy or negative features of Stalinism and Maoism. Unlike the Soviet Union, the Chinese leaders did not lose control over the diversifying social processes, and the pressures for the acceleration of liberalisation were counterbalanced by political campaigns and partial suspension of reforms where necessary. Moreover, new policies were hindered by both party and state actors at various levels and conflicts between different authorities including those between managers and party secretaries in enterprises. That is why Premier Zhao Ziyang pushed reforms ahead with increasing vehemence since 1986.<sup>881</sup> By that time, Deng defined the political reform by three rather general characteristics: (1) maintaining the vitality of the Party and the nation inclusive of rejuvenation of the leadership; (2) overcoming bureaucratism, reducing bureaucracy, improving efficiency; (3)

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<sup>877</sup> Miller (2016), p. 179.

<sup>878</sup> Record of Meeting (1978).

<sup>879</sup> Deng (1980).

<sup>880</sup> Sun (1995b), p. 127.

<sup>881</sup> Sun (1995b), p. 134.

motivating people through decentralisation of power inclusive of democratisation of management in enterprises.<sup>882</sup>

Within the second wave of political reform in the second half of the 1980s, the task of a precise delineation of the functions and powers of the party and state bodies as well as further strengthening of the local institutions was proclaimed by the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1987. Zhao argued that it was these measures together with the reduction of the apparatus which embodied the conception of political reform designed by Deng.<sup>883</sup> According to Zuenko, these changes marked the culmination of China's political reforms.<sup>884</sup> The process of dissolution of communes entailed the separation between economic management and political administration and the transfer of political functions to township and village governments. The Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees was passed in 1987 to institute new self-government bodies at the local level as the primary mass organisation of self-government with substantial autonomy mostly in economic affairs.<sup>885</sup> Competitive elections to township councils started to be introduced and the central National People's Congress became more autonomous. "The NPC could not set its own agenda, which was established by the party leadership, but it did modify, revise, send back and on certain issue withhold approval of party programs and it criticised the government for not implementing laws it had passed. In the 1990s, votes for party policies were no longer automatically unanimous."<sup>886</sup>

The influence of actors promoting radical democratisation grew stronger in the second half of the 1980s, but this movement, which started to pose a threat to the power monopoly of the Communist Party, was suppressed in 1989. Amidst the May demonstrations, General Secretary Zhao adopted a very benevolent stance and formulated the five following priorities: (1) suppressing corruption among bureaucracy and party and state apparatus; (2) making the governance at all levels transparent; (3) implementing political reforms with the aim to introduce political pluralism; (4) introducing rule of law; and (5) strengthening public control over state authorities through the National People's Congress whose position was to be made central. This programme was followed by a letter to Deng whereby the general secretary called for accepting protesters' demands.<sup>887</sup> These, however, went far beyond the framework set by the Four

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<sup>882</sup> Cable No. 3025 (1986).

<sup>883</sup> Galenovich (2012), p. 551.

<sup>884</sup> Zuenko (2015), p. 65.

<sup>885</sup> Marsh (2005), p. 73.

<sup>886</sup> Fairbank & Goldman (2001), p. 420.

<sup>887</sup> Galenovich (2012), pp. 91-92, 118.

Modernisations and Four Cardinal Principles. Upon the suppression of the protest movement and Zhao's removal, debates on political reform ended. They were subsequently reopened by the 14<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress in 1992, which reaffirmed the reform course represented by Deng Xiaoping.<sup>888</sup>

The complex and contradictory development after the launch of reforms, which culminated in the opposition movement and social unrest in the spring of 1989, also led to changes at the supreme political level. The positions of president, general secretary, and chairman of the Central Military Commission would be held by the only person as was usual during Mao's life, the paramount leader's tenure would be limited to two five-year consecutive terms at most, age ceilings were introduced with 70 years at the maximum, the position of the Politburo Standing Committee was reaffirmed as the highest executive collective body in which general secretary's role would be limited to that of *primus inter pares* and the principles of deliberation and consensus would be strengthened.<sup>889</sup> At the same time, the party became increasingly open to representatives of different social strata inclusive of the businessmen.<sup>890</sup>

It would be too simplistic to see the course of the reforms in the Asian country as a linear process without fundamental contradictions and political struggles and put it in contrast to the developments in the Soviet Union which was torn by internal frictions. *Tout au contraire*, the history of the Chinese reforms provides us with a colourful picture of the (not always peaceful) coexistence of different streams and interest groups with contradictory visions. Similarly, Deng's role in the reform process was not unambiguous and other actors often took the lead in advancing reforms. Even though Deng played a crucial role in the post-Mao period, he frequently stood aside and balanced the interests of feuding factions rather than pushing radical reforms ahead. At different stages of reform, the real movers were Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Wan Li rather than Deng Xiaoping.<sup>891</sup> Aside from the "reform centre" represented by Hu and Zhao was there an informal power centre of the party elders. The existence of this power structure dates to Maoist times when Mao was forced to give up the position of the chairman of the PRC in favour of Liu Shaoqi in 1959 and subsequently exerted influence upon the political affairs from the background. It is worth noting that one of the elders during the reform period was President Li Xiannian, who belonged to the prominent opponents of reform. Even though the elders tended to "conservative" attitudes and came into conflict with both Hu and Zhao, they were largely

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<sup>888</sup> Sun (1995b), p. 150.

<sup>889</sup> Bakešová, Kučera & Lavička (2019), p. 215.

<sup>890</sup> Marsh (2005), p. 74.

<sup>891</sup> Galenovich (2012), p. 22.

supportive of economic reforms unlike such actors as Deng Liqun, the director of the party Propaganda Department in 1982–1985, and Hu Qiaomu, an influential academician, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Politburo member.<sup>892</sup>

Nonetheless, Hu and Zhao did not hold identical stances either. In 1983, for instance, Hu began to implement the rural family contract system in cities and enterprises, which was stopped by Zhao who preferred a more moderate path.<sup>893</sup> Disagreements existed on the issue of price reform, which was an acute problem in 1988 and was suspended by Zhao contrary to Deng’s attitude, as well as on the scope and goal of the reforms as such. It is not without interest that Chinese propaganda bodies and media were dominated by “conservatives”, which undermined the potential of radical reformers such as Hu and Zhao and helped Deng to keep control over the reform process despite a number of centrifugal tendencies. Galenovich argues that both Hu and Zhao aimed at a gradual transition to a multiparty parliamentary system and free market, which was unacceptable for Deng who contributed to their removal in 1987 and 1989 respectively. While advocating the campaign against “bourgeois liberalisation” and crackdown on the protest movement, Deng foughted the CPC Deputy Chairman Chen Yun who warned against “capitalist influence” brought about by the economic liberalisation defended by the former.<sup>894</sup> Eventually, it was Deng who gave a decisive impetus to the reform revival in 1992.

### 6.1.3 *Economic reforms*

Reforms in China started from agriculture. The official reform course was preceded by partial experiments which date to the 1960s. It was in 1962 when Chen Yun and Liu Shaoqi together with Deng Xiaoping consented to the expansion of the household responsibility system in rural areas after this practice had begun to expand spontaneously in Anhui province. The family contract system enabled peasants to keep the surplus output for themselves and sell it to their brigade, which was the superior organisational unit. The land was leased to peasants who were provided with tools, seeds, and fertilizers. At the same time, they could not decide what to grow, for it was set by the brigade leaders.<sup>895</sup> Already in that time, Deng manifested germs of future pragmatism. Referring to the Anhui experiment, he stated: “It doesn’t matter if the cat is black or yellow, as long as it can catch mice it is a good cat.”<sup>896</sup> This slogan—which makes effects and efficiency the

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<sup>892</sup> Galenovich (2012), pp. 40-41.

<sup>893</sup> Galenovich (2012), pp. 263-264.

<sup>894</sup> Galenovich (2012), pp. 16-17.

<sup>895</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 217.

<sup>896</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015,) p. 222.

criterion of politics—would become famous during the post-Mao reforms and opening up. After the Cultural Revolution, the household responsibility system was revived in the same province, but it went farther than before. Some peasants divided up the land, made decisions on what to crop, and sold surpluses on a market basis. Deng did not support these spontaneous developments but let them happen. By contrast, Zhao Ziyang, Party's first secretary of Sichuan province, actively promoted the changes. He approved the division of collective land and assignment of tasks by households themselves.<sup>897</sup> Some industries were allowed to keep a part of their profits while the latter had been taken by the state earlier.<sup>898</sup> The central government assisted the development by considerable increases in subsidies, credits and purchase price of agricultural commodities in conjunction with reduction of taxes. Pantsov and Levine observed that the grain production increased by 8 per cent year-on-year in 1979.<sup>899</sup> In Xiaogang village, the production soared six times and peasants' average income rose eighteenfold in the same period. In 1979, up to 98 per cent of farms adopted the new system.<sup>900</sup> Nonetheless, de-collectivisation did not entail privatisation of land. The latter remained in the collective ownership of the village and was leased to peasants for a limited time.<sup>901</sup> In 1984, the period was expanded for 15 years and more, which strengthened the economic motivation on the part of peasants. Concurrently, peasants were allowed to hire workers, buy tools, and participate in wholesale trade.<sup>902</sup> Reform China thus abandoned the Maoist policy modelled on Dazhai example and transformed the agriculture to boost individual initiative, labour productivity, efficiency and production.

Reform measures in industry were aimed at reduction of the planned sector, increase in autonomy of enterprises, substitution of state quotas with a tax system, revision of wage system, liberalisation of both retail and wholesale trade as well as foreign trade and overall promotion of private and non-state sectors. The emphasis was moved from heavy to light industry and services. It told on the reversion of a long-term trend of industrial growth where heavy industry grew faster. By contrast, between 1979 and 1990, heavy industry grew at 10 per cent per annum compared to the light industry's growth of 14 per cent per annum.<sup>903</sup> Within a dual-track price reform, enterprises were permitted to sell their production surplus at market prices since 1981.<sup>904</sup> The

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<sup>897</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 363.

<sup>898</sup> Miller (2016), p. 84.

<sup>899</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 363.

<sup>900</sup> Miller (2015), p. 218.

<sup>901</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 191.

<sup>902</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 389.

<sup>903</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 217.

<sup>904</sup> Pei (1994), p. 98.

share of retail prices set by the state authorities was gradually decreasing—it dropped to around one-third at the end of the 1980s and over the next years almost all retail prices were fully liberalised.<sup>905</sup> In 1986, a new labour system was introduced within which many of the former guarantees including the life employment were cancelled. Analogous guarantees for enterprises were revoked and the institution of bankruptcy was implemented. The new conditions enabled enterprises to enter the capital market while others were leased to workers.<sup>906</sup> In 1988, private companies were fully legalised. Private sector was more developed in the rural areas. By 1992, decollectivised agriculture and rural industry accounted for 48.3 per cent of China's gross state product.<sup>907</sup> The boom of rural collectively-owned enterprises, that is, township and village enterprises (TVEs) became one of the engines of the post-Mao socioeconomic development and prosperity of local governments.<sup>908</sup> Interestingly, those groundbreaking changes were quite often in motion without a prior state conception.<sup>909</sup>

The opening to the external economic environment was an inseparable part of the economic reform. Unlike Japan or South Korea, China allowed a massive inflow of foreign direct investment from which it expected access to technology and know-how. At the same time, Beijing protected the domestic market against excessive imports of foreign manufactures, which motivated external economic subjects to invest in the country itself. The most frequent form was a joint venture, which was legalised at the outset of the reforms in 1979.<sup>910</sup> China decided to establish special economic zones (SEZ) as many East Asian countries did it before. The companies enjoyed tax concessions, duty-free regime, and other incentives. Businesses could have been fully owned by foreign investors whose activities were facilitated by regulatory flexibility and the construction of infrastructure by central state bodies.<sup>911</sup> First SEZs were set up in Shantou, Shenzhen, Xiamen and Zhuhai near economically advanced areas in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, which provided them with additional advantages.

In 1984, the concept of SEZ was supplemented with National Economic and Technological Development Zones (ETDZ), which were established in 14 cities inclusive of Dalian, Guangzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai. In contrast to the SEZs, the ETDZs were not separated by checkpoints from

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<sup>905</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 175.

<sup>906</sup> Sun (1995b), p. 73.

<sup>907</sup> Pei (1994), pp. 89-90.

<sup>908</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 220.

<sup>909</sup> Pei (1994), p. 94.

<sup>910</sup> Nolan (1995), pp. 184-188.

<sup>911</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 103-104.

the rest of China's territory, which further contributed to their economic dynamics.<sup>912</sup> The state support for FDI was combined with assistance to domestic exporters and barriers for foreign importers. Preferred sectors were allowed to keep a large share of profit, were provided with cheap credits for technological innovation as well as low prices of power and raw materials, and enjoyed lower taxes and preferential access to imported technology. Foreign subjects were, in turn, prohibited from importing certain types of goods. Trade policy of high tariffs was maintained for the whole period with the aim to protect Chinese producers against excessive international competition and encourage import substitution.<sup>913</sup>

The developments after 1978 were characteristic of the alternation of and tension between centralisation and decentralisation, liberalisation, and repression. Unlike the Soviet Union, the central authorities held the reins of fiscal and monetary policy, while decentralisation was gradually enhanced wherever it did not contradict the core principles and vital interests of the central party and state apparatuses.<sup>914</sup> Provincial and local bodies got involved in the transformation through the transfer of powers in managing economic affairs including tax revenues, which motivated them to enhance reforms. Most historians agree that the reform policies and transformation processes were typical of the same logic—local *experimentation* under supervision and investigation from the centre and *gradualism* without radical, Mao-like leaps. This course of action strengthened proreform consensus throughout party and state apparatuses and social groups and mitigated an excessive political and social polarisation.<sup>915</sup>

The practice-oriented adjustments prevented the erroneous political interventions emerging from ideology-driven considerations of the political actors and the gradual character of the implementation of innovative policies inclusive of market mechanisms combined with the absence of a rigorous promarket political programme weakened the counterpressure of the orthodox opposition.<sup>916</sup> Market experiments were carried out in line with the so-called Three No's policy, that is, no official promotion, no propaganda, no crackdown.<sup>917</sup> As Zuenko observes, there was no final and comprehensive vision of the future socioeconomic transformation at least until 1985.<sup>918</sup> The strategy based upon experimentation, gradualism and practice contrasted with the

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<sup>912</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 390.

<sup>913</sup> Nolan (1995), pp. 189-190.

<sup>914</sup> Miller (2016), p. 160.

<sup>915</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 170.

<sup>916</sup> Pei (1994), p. 71.

<sup>917</sup> Marsh (2005), p. 39.

<sup>918</sup> Zuenko (2015), p. 61.

Gorbachevian perestroika which tended to the opposite attitude. “A crucial difference between the Chinese reformers and their Soviet counterparts in liberalising the private sector was the *pragmatic-entrepreneurial* approach favoured by the former and the *formal-legal* approach pursued by the latter. In China, the passage of operative laws and decrees, if any, usually followed the emergence of a grassroots economic movement, whereas in the Soviet Union, laws typically preceded the emergence of a similar movement.”<sup>919</sup>

The first years of the reform general line brought about tangible results. Pantsov and Levine cite the following figures: Between 1978 and 1984, GDP increased by 66 per cent, that is, 8.8 per cent on average per year. The volume of industrial production grew by more than 78 per cent, and agriculture production reached its record in 1984 when the Chinese farms produced over 407 million tons of grain, which is by 100 million tons more than in 1978.<sup>920</sup> The picture can be supplemented with the data presented by Nolan: from 1980 to 1991 the average annual GDP growth amounted to 5.7 per cent in agriculture, 11.0 per cent in industry and 11.2 per cent in services, in other words, GDP grew by 9.4 per cent on average in this period.<sup>921</sup> It follows that benefits and strengths of the transformation were obvious by the moment when Gorbachev took over power in the Soviet Union. Naturally, economic reforms produced a wide array of negative side effects—inflation, unemployment, corruption, and finally social divisions and political polarisation. Liberalisation gave birth to radical streams whose exponents pursued the transition to liberal democracy with its conception of political regime, rule of law, and human rights. The emerging socioeconomic problems intensified internal struggles within the ruling CPC and some of the highest representatives such as Zhao Ziyang were in favour of a large-scale political reform, while others threw ideological and political imperatives away and made their best to capitalise on the expansion of the market and liberalisation through abuse of authority and corruption.<sup>922</sup> The flames of social discontent were fanned by galloping inflation which reached 19 per cent in 1988. The civic opposition movement hit its peak in 1989, but the CPC succeeded both in suppressing the unrest and coping with the macroeconomic risks.<sup>923</sup> The political repression and deceleration of economic reform after the events at Tiananmen Square, nevertheless, did not reverse the general line. The inflow of FDI continued despite the imposition of sanctions on the

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<sup>919</sup> Pei (1994), p. 132.

<sup>920</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 392.

<sup>921</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 11.

<sup>922</sup> Zuenko (2015), pp. 63-66.

<sup>923</sup> Geiger & Pennings (2021).

country, and the economic subjects from the U.S. themselves invested more than \$11 billion from 1989 to 1991 compared to \$9 billion between 1985 and 1988.<sup>924</sup>

A new impetus to the acceleration of economic reform was given in 1992, when the “patriarch” spoke out against the restrictive economic policies which threatened the overall reform process.<sup>925</sup> At first, the retired revolutionary veteran Deng Xiaoping carried out a tour to southern China including Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Zhuhai, that is, the economic engine of reform and opening up, and exerted pressure on the political leadership to deepen the reform course based on the Four Cardinal Principles.<sup>926</sup> At the 14<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, he defined criteria to which the CPC and the state policies should have been subjected as follows: development of productive forces, strengthening of power of the socialist state and increase in living standards.<sup>927</sup> During his southern tour and work at the CPC Congress, Deng crowned his pragmatist notion of socialism which is far from orthodoxy of both Maoism and Stalinism. It is centred on the development of productive forces, economic efficiency, elimination of poverty, rejuvenation of the spiritual life of people, market economy, and its regulation along the line of the imperative of common prosperity which includes the prevention of the rise of a capitalist class and restoration of capitalism.<sup>928</sup> The flexible and practice-oriented concept of socialism was thus maintained and further developed under the overarching term of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

## 6.2 Reform patterns in the post-Stalin Soviet Union

Reform aspirations were appearing in the Soviet Union throughout its history since the very beginning. Even though the hegemonic ideology played a crucial role in defining concrete policies, and influenced the behaviour of individual actors, it was not an immutable monolith. At the same time, the victory of Stalinism shaped the development of the country until the collapse of the regime. Reform policies under Malenkov, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev did not change the Stalinist mode substantially and Andropov was not given sufficient time to do so.

Nikita Khrushchev was a contradictory leader. His attacks on the cult of personality and Stalinism undermined the legitimacy and continuity of the Communist regime and cast doubt on the Soviet leadership within the ICM. Khrushchev enjoyed support for his reform plans on the part of the

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<sup>924</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), p. 424.

<sup>925</sup> Galenovich (2012), p. 490.

<sup>926</sup> Pantsov & Levine (2015), pp. 424-425.

<sup>927</sup> Vinogradov (2010), p. 116.

<sup>928</sup> Li (2018), p. 161; Nolan (1995), p. 225; Sun (1995b), p. 203.

party apparatus if these coincided with its interests dictated by the need for the restoration of the dominant position of the Communist Party, which had been exposed to repression under Stalin. The new leader promoted the idea of collective leadership and the superiority of the Party to the state. Notwithstanding the fact that some policies and conceptual innovations—particularly the all-people’s state, all-people’s party and peaceful coexistence with the United States—were lambasted as revisionist by Mao, some affinities between both leaders can be observed.<sup>929</sup> They shared a kind of populism aimed against elitism and bureaucratism, highlighting the popular character of the Party, mass participation and campaigns, decentralisation and devolution of certain powers from the top as well as voluntarism which manifested itself by the idea of an accelerated transition to Communism.<sup>930</sup> At the same time, Khrushchev, while denouncing Stalinism, omitted many aspects of Stalin’s rule such as forced collectivisation, persecution and killings of foreign Communists, hostile attitude towards social democratic movement and inequality within the International Communist Movement.<sup>931</sup>

Khrushchev focused on changing the Soviet economic policies through support for agriculture and peasants, extension of agricultural land, decentralisation of economic management, development of foreign trade inclusive of substantial imports of machinery, know-how and food, wage reform, strengthening of the welfare state and last but not least cuts in military expenditures on conventional forces in favour of missile and space domains.<sup>932</sup> The transfer of power from central branch ministries to regional *sovnarkhozy* (Councils of National Economy) was dictated by the interest to weaken the “bureaucratic centralism” and the state apparatus to the benefit of the party one.<sup>933</sup> However, the results were mixed. Baibakov believes that the introduction of the principle of territorial organisation was the first strong blow to the Soviet economy.<sup>934</sup> Similarly, Sutela argues that Khrushchev’s fight against excessive centralisation and departmentalism led to localism instead.<sup>935</sup>

Soviet economist Ivan Khudenko was allowed to launch experiments in agriculture aimed to increase labour productivity and efficiency through reorganisation and introduction of material incentives. The land was cultivated by a link (*zveno*) with borrowed seed and equipment instead

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<sup>929</sup> Mao (1964).

<sup>930</sup> Bernstein & Li (2010), p. 17; Sakwa (1998), p. 60.

<sup>931</sup> Gromyko (2015), p. 530.

<sup>932</sup> Hanson (2014), pp. 51-52.

<sup>933</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), p. 96; Hanson (2014), p. 58.

<sup>934</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 136.

<sup>935</sup> Sutela (1991), p. 53.

of a much larger brigade, and peasants were paid for production instead of working hours.<sup>936</sup> This *link system* was supplemented with the introduction of autonomous management or *khozraschet* and limited market elements. Even though the results were impressive, the experiment was later banned and Khudenko imprisoned.<sup>937</sup> Despite his leanings towards reform and decentralisation, the Soviet leader took measures against rural plots which were exempt from central planning, more efficient compared to collective agriculture and largely subject to market logic. It demonstrates that Khrushchev was an adherent of the Stalinist conception of collectivised agriculture and was even more orthodox than Stalin in this regard. As Hanson sums it up, Khrushchev did not conduct any real reform of the Soviet economic system.<sup>938</sup>

Brezhnev's attitude towards his predecessor's legacy was ambiguous. It maintained some of the innovations while abolishing others. The concepts of all-people's state and Party remained a part of the official discourse and were enriched with the notion of developed socialism. Brezhnev used this term, coined by Fedor Burlatskii in 1966, to reaffirm the achievements of the construction of socialism in the country whose socioeconomic and political system had created a "new historical community of the Soviet people", a society which was seen as free of social antagonisms.<sup>939</sup> The new general secretary highlighted a peculiarity of "socialist way of life" and concluded that the Soviet Stalinist model was worth preserving and developing through an "acceleration of scientific and technological progress".<sup>940</sup> Brezhnev's priorities were the improvement of living standards and welfare state internally and prevention of war externally. Pavlov points to the problematic side of the Brezhnevite welfare state when arguing that by the 1980s more than 50 per cent of GDP was spent on social benefits items which were free for citizens. It had devastating consequences for work ethics and called for a new system of evaluation of labour to create new stimuli. That is why Pavlov believed that the monetary-financial area was to be the initial area of reform, which was underestimated by the main architects of perestroika.<sup>941</sup> Ordinary citizens became used to the social benefits and guarantees and perceived them as normal and natural.<sup>942</sup> Falin addressed this problem in terms of "social parasitism".<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Tucker (1987), p. 141.

<sup>937</sup> Sakwa (1998), p. 229.

<sup>938</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 91.

<sup>939</sup> Robinson (1995), pp. 84-85; Sakwa (1998), p. 68.

<sup>940</sup> Robinson (1995), p. 92.

<sup>941</sup> Pavlov (1995), p. 37.

<sup>942</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 48.

<sup>943</sup> Falin (1999b), p. 238.

Brezhnev was aware of some problems of Soviet economy, but he lacked sufficient economic expertise as well as political will and vision to cope with them in a fundamental way.<sup>944</sup> Grishin depicts early Brezhnev as a lively and courageous leader who made his best to enhance the economy through reforms.<sup>945</sup> Such an optimistic picture, however, contrasts with the actual developments. There were no long-term strategies like Lenin's GOELRO, Stalin's collectivisation and industrialisation, and Khrushchev's plan for building Communism anymore. His reform effort limited itself to the restoration of restricted private plot farming, Kosygin's reform programme in the second half of the 1960s, superficial adjustments in 1979, and a Food Programme launched in the last year of his life which was to increase the volume of capital investment in agriculture and raise both agricultural procurement prices and state subsidies to the sector.

Arbatov asserts that serious discussions about economic problems were going on in the political leadership since the 1960s. However, neither politicians nor an overwhelming majority of ordinary citizens were prepared for any kind of radical economic change. People's consciousness was very conservative and full of ideological clichés.<sup>946</sup> In 1965, Premier Alexei Kosygin put forward a reform plan with the aim to improve efficiency and increase production through a variety of measures. These included reintroduction of central branch ministries instead of sovnarkhozy, revision of the incentive system at the level of enterprises, revision of the price system inclusive of an increase in wholesale prices, devolution of economic decision-making from the centre to enterprises, reduction of obligatory indicators, strengthening the linkage between bonuses and economic performance as well as a shift from centrally planned supply of inputs towards wholesale trading among SOEs at centrally set prices but under decentralised output and supply decisions.<sup>947</sup> In other words, autonomy of enterprises should have been expanded and their operation was to pass into actual *khozraschet*.<sup>948</sup> However, the reform suffered from one-sided orientation on industry without revising agriculture, trade or research and development. Baibakov points to another problematic point: the larger autonomy of enterprises in terms of managing their resources was not accompanied by sufficient control mechanisms. As a result, wages began to grow excessively while the productivity lagged behind, which contradicted Voznesenskii's basic principle of socialist planning.<sup>949</sup>

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<sup>944</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 331-332.

<sup>945</sup> Grishin (1996), p. 32.

<sup>946</sup> Arbatov (2002), pp. 308-310.

<sup>947</sup> Hanson (2014), pp. 101-103; Sutela (1991), p. 71.

<sup>948</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 311.

<sup>949</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 172.

The goals of higher efficiency, quality of production, and responsiveness to consumer demand were not reached.<sup>950</sup> Moreover, it lacked a wider political support. Baibakov recalls how the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgorny declared that the country did not need any reforms.<sup>951</sup> In conjunction with the reform developments in Czechoslovakia, which were suppressed by Moscow-led military intervention in 1968, the space for comprehensive revisions became extremely narrow and politically dangerous. In September, the Institute of the U.S. submitted an analysis warning against the risk of socioeconomic stagnation to the Central Committee, but it was ignored.<sup>952</sup> Primakov argues that Brezhnev was not against reform at first but it changed radically in 1968.<sup>953</sup> Kosygin gave up his reform ambitions and the Soviet economy was recentralised in early 1970s again. Some indicators which had been cancelled several years ago were reintroduced and attention was paid to better planning and central governance inclusive of automatisisation and computerisation. Paradoxically, many innovative ideas such as Viktor Glushkov's project of the establishment of a cybernetic network known as National Automated System for Computation and Information Processing (OGAS) aimed at automatisisation of the system of economic management were rejected for political reasons.<sup>954</sup>

The widespread mindset in relation to socioeconomic problems and negative features among the political leadership can also be demonstrated by reactions to Gosplan's critical analyses. The committee's chairman describes that in March 1975 the Gosplan warned the Politburo against the growing discrepancy between expenditure and production as well as the increasing dependence on imports of items of strategic importance. Brezhnev marginalised such an analysis and declared instead that the ending 9<sup>th</sup> five-year plan was the most successful in Soviet history. The analysis was withdrawn from circulation and the Central Committee could not have discussed it at all. In his memoirs, Baibakov argues that he informed Brezhnev about the economic problems repeatedly, but the general secretary disliked unpleasant discussions, which allegedly contrasted with Stalin's attitude and his active work with the Politburo members to solve the topical issues.<sup>955</sup> Three years later, Andrei Kirilenko, an influential Politburo member responsible for Brezhnev's cadre policy, told his Italian counterparts that no economic reforms

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<sup>950</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 312-313.

<sup>951</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 171.

<sup>952</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 139.

<sup>953</sup> Primakov (1999), p. 19.

<sup>954</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 318-319.

<sup>955</sup> Baibakov (1998), pp. 178-184.

were needed in the country.<sup>956</sup> Therefore, it is far from surprising that all Brezhnevite economic reforms ended in failure.<sup>957</sup>

It was undoubtedly connected with concurrent successes at the international level and massive incomes from the export of raw materials, which postponed the need for taking active steps to innovate the economic model for the national economy worked sufficiently.<sup>958</sup> But the objective ageing of the leaders also played its negative role. Even Grishin admits that the general secretary's behaviour was worse and worse and negative features of Brezhnev's personality prevailed. Both Gromyko and Ligachev remind that the Politburo sessions were short and formal by that time and it was only Andropov who made the Politburo a real decision-making and operative body again.<sup>959</sup> The first secretary of the Moscow City Committee relates the growing economic problems of the early 1980s to a combination of subjective and objective factors, first of all, Brezhnev's illness, Tikhonov's weakness, several seasons of poor harvest, weakened labour discipline and the boom of illegal activities but he refuses to interpret Brezhnev's period as *zastoi* just as Baibakov.<sup>960</sup> Gromyko adds that the general secretary was unable to work for the last three years.<sup>961</sup> Similarly, Akhromeev mentions Brezhnev's poor state of health which resulted in the lack of leadership no later than since 1976.<sup>962</sup> This fact contributed to missteps in foreign policy and strategic miscalculations including the engagement in wars in Ethiopia, Angola and especially Afghanistan.<sup>963</sup>

Despite the low political interest in politico-economic reform was there a number of state institutions and academicians whose research was innovative, ideologically heterodox, and more or less divergent from the dominant neo-Stalinist discourse. Their ideas sometimes influenced the state policies and laid the intellectual foundations for perestroika of the 1980s. Economist Evsei Liberman inspired Kosygin by his draft of economic reform. The latter was to provide

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<sup>956</sup> Brutents (1998), p. 139.

<sup>957</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 333.

<sup>958</sup> Miller (2016), p. 76.

<sup>959</sup> Gromyko (2015), p. 541; Ligachev (1993), pp. 18-19.

<sup>960</sup> Grishin (1996), pp. 45-46, 54-55.

<sup>961</sup> Gromyko (2015), p. 543.

<sup>962</sup> One of high-level diplomats recalls that Brezhnev was aware of his personal disabilities at least from time to time and proposed his resignation twice but he was persuaded by Chernenko, Gromyko, Solomentsev, Tikhonov and Ustinov not to do so (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, p. 273).

<sup>963</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), pp. 23-24. Kornienko argues that the final consent to the intervention to Afghanistan was a result of a narrative pursued by Suslov and Ponomarev who interpreted Afghanistan as a country in transition from feudalism to socialism similar to Mongolia. In this regard, the decisive motive for the intervention was the ideology-based, neo-Stalinist conviction that it would save the country for forthcoming victory of socialism (Akhromeev & Kornienko, 1992, pp. 171-173).

enterprises with more autonomy and responsibility, limit central planning, and introduce some market mechanisms as well as a new incentive system correlated to profit.<sup>964</sup> Vasilii Nemchinov dedicated himself to the *khozraschet* economy or a cost-accounting system of planning which presupposed a reduction of obligatory indicators, introduction of a stable and long-term normatives-based planning together with stronger and transparent legal regulation to minimise political and bureaucratic arbitrariness and infringement on the economic processes as well as granting enterprises more autonomy. Nemchinov did not pursue self-management or political reforms, but he called for a middle course between rigorous planning on one hand and market on the other. Economist's ideas on *khozraschet* and planning by normatives together with the emphasis on the activation of human factor and dependence of socioeconomic progress on the creativity of masses, had an influence on Gorbachev who explicitly referred to Nemchinov's work.<sup>965</sup>

The most famous reform manifesto of the 1960s was Gennadii Lisichkin's *Plan and Market (Plan i rynek)*, published in 1966.<sup>966</sup> By that time a galaxy of innovative economists including Leonid Abalkin, Abel Aganbegian and Vadim Medvedev, who would be actively involved in perestroika, was emerging. Abalkin and Medvedev were leading figures of the political economy of socialism within which such concepts as perestroika, *glasnost'* and human factor were employed years before Gorbachev's accession to power. Abalkin addressed the problem of people's psychological barrier to economic reform, which was to be overcome by means of a wide access to information, possibility of open discussion, and participation in management. Both Abalkin and Medvedev researched *commodity-money relations* or *planned socialist markets* based on planning of prices and other parameters with the concurrent use of shadow, quasi-market prices as an instrument of indirect centralism.<sup>967</sup> Medvedev was the first economist to become a Politburo member since Nikolai Voznesenskii who was executed in 1950. Sutela considers Medvedev's book *Management of Socialist Production: Problems of Theory and Practice (Upravlenie sotsialisticheskim proizvodstvom: Problemy teorii i praktiki)* from 1983 a seminal work of early perestroika.<sup>968</sup> Aganbegian, in turn, made the Novosibirsk Institute of Economics and Organisation of Industrial Economics one of the most prominent centres of reform-oriented economic and sociological research in the Soviet Union. Already in 1965, he prepared an unpublic

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<sup>964</sup> Sakwa (1998), p. 226; Sutela (1991), pp. 54-55.

<sup>965</sup> Sutela (1991), pp. 62-66.

<sup>966</sup> English (2000), pp. 97-98.

<sup>967</sup> Sutela (1991), pp. 106-107.

<sup>968</sup> Sutela (1991), pp. 111-112.

report for the political leadership whereby warning against the risk of decline in living standards and economic growth and inflation and calling for autonomy of enterprises (khozraschet), introduction of market elements, price reform as well as participation in foreign trade and international division of labour.<sup>969</sup> Aganbegian took part in drafting Gorbachev's acceleration policies in 1985 and later in preparing a plan on transition to market in 1990.<sup>970</sup>

Centres of innovative thinking that overcame neo-Stalinist discourse and tended either to neo-Leninism or to liberal socialism emerged mostly at the Soviet Academy of Sciences but also within the party apparatus, particularly the International Department and the Liaison Department of the Central Committee which employed more people with high quality education, knowledge and critical mindset than other central departments.<sup>971</sup> The new platforms were given a new impetus by the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress. The International Department was closely connected with the international journal *Problemy mira i sotsializma* (*Problems of Peace and Socialism*, also known as *World Marxist Review*), which was established in 1958 with the aim to pursue the official Soviet discourse within the ICM. Paradoxically, the community around the journal turned into a seedbed of intellectual heterodoxy and a centre of intraparty dissent.<sup>972</sup> In the headquarters located in Prague did many future proponents of perestroika and close associates of both Andropov and Gorbachev worked including Georgii Arbatov, Oleg Bogomolov, Aleksandr Bovin, Karen Brutents, Anatolii Cherniaev, Lev Deliusin, Ivan Frolov, Nikolai Inozemtsev, Vladimir Lukin, Aleksei Rumiantsev, Georgii Shakhnazarov and Vadim Zagladin.<sup>973</sup> Many of these cadres subsequently continued their careers at the Academy of Sciences. Arbatov headed the Institute of the U.S. and Canada, Bogomolov became a director of the Institute of the Economy of the World Socialist System (IEMSS), Deliusin led the Institute of Scientific Information on the Social Sciences (INION) while Inozemtsev was appointed a director of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) which was the first Soviet institute specialised in international relations and foreign policy.<sup>974</sup> Academicians at these institutes were in interaction with the Western scholarship and were more open to Western influence.<sup>975</sup> Within these institutes, new attitudes and policies were elaborated and discussed.<sup>976</sup> Shakhnazarov—together

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<sup>969</sup> English (2000), p. 99.

<sup>970</sup> Sutela (1991), p. 118.

<sup>971</sup> Brown (2007), pp. 167-168.

<sup>972</sup> Primakov (1999), p. 15.

<sup>973</sup> Brown (2007), p. 162.

<sup>974</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 105.

<sup>975</sup> English (2000), p. 125.

<sup>976</sup> Primakov (1999), p. 36.

with Fedor Burlatskii—were pioneers of Soviet political science. In his *Socialist Democracy (Sotsialisticheskaia demokratiia)* from 1972, Shakhnazarov stressed the need for wider democracy and glasnost' and at the beginning of the 1980s he called for collective security and de-ideologisation of foreign policy.<sup>977</sup>

The rise in innovative thinking was also related to consultants who constituted a privileged group enjoying the opportunity to talk to the leaders as well as some material benefits without being a part of the bureaucratic machine. Unlike the apparatchiks who were fettered by rigid party discipline and subordination, consultants were relatively free to express their opinions both internally and partially in public.<sup>978</sup> This phenomenon was born thanks to Andropov and his decision to invite Vladimir Khvostov as a consultant to the Central Committee. The first group of consultants was formed by Lev Tolkunov under Andropov's auspices and consisted of Georgii Arbatov, Oleg Bogomolov, Aleksandr Bovin, Fedor Burlatskii, Lev Deliusin, Boris Gorbachev, Fedor Petrenko and Georgii Shakhnazarov.<sup>979</sup> Burlatskii recalls that Andropov never refused any of the candidates irrespective of their unorthodox opinions.<sup>980</sup> Consultants working under the International Department prepared briefings about political issues and arguments for leaders to be able to defend and pursue their policies. One of these consultants, Brutents, recalls that their group was limited and included only 20 people during nearly three decades.<sup>981</sup> Cherniaev testifies that both consultants and officials in the department often held opinions which differed from the official political line. Communication with their counterparts in other Communist parties was largely free and open, while references to ideological dogmas and superiors' opinions were perceived as inappropriate.<sup>982</sup>

This reform-minded milieu emerged within the party and state apparatus and its actors occupied influential positions through which they could affect the dominant discourse and create a counter-discourse against the neo-Stalinist hegemony. Historian Archie Brown describes this paradoxical development through Ding's concept of *institutional amphibiousness* to argue that the reforms were initiated and motivated by official institutions and not by what is usually called civil society or dissent (in which he fully agrees with Burlatskii's opinion).<sup>983</sup> The institutional

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<sup>977</sup> English (2000), p. 177.

<sup>978</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 69.

<sup>979</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), pp. 133-134.

<sup>980</sup> Burlatskii (1990), p. 250.

<sup>981</sup> Brutents (1998), pp. 226-229.

<sup>982</sup> Cherniaev (1995), p. 368.

<sup>983</sup> Brown (2007); Burlatskii (1996), p. 361.

amphibiousness shows that some institutions in the Communist regimes were used for aims which were different from or opposite to the original purpose. Such institutions served conflicting interests simultaneously and frequently were of a parasitic character since they depended on the party-state structures in terms of funds, protection, or staff while undermining the established hegemony at the same time.<sup>984</sup> It is this environment where perestroika of the 1980s originated and which reversed the hegemony of neo-Stalinism in the Soviet Union.

### 6.3 Soviet perestroika (1983–1991)

Behaviour, thinking and policies of general secretaries had always an enormous impact on the Soviet Union and its development. Leaders faced various challenges and tasks and had to cope with the particular interests of individual actors within the system. The latter was not a monolith and the hegemony of a certain discourse was only temporary, being exposed to opposition from alternative discourses. Gorbachev's case is interesting in this regard because his "era" became a period of disruptive changes and intensive competition of several discourses. Dominance of the neo-Stalinist discourse had been broken before Gorbachev's accession to the highest party position. Gorbachev's actions and conceptions were, nevertheless, shaped by various discourses which were competing within the mind of the general secretary himself over time. Even though liberal socialism took the lead eventually, such a result was hardly decided in advance. For quite a long time, Gorbachev advocated neo-Leninist policies while liberal socialist concepts remained secondary at most.

#### 6.3.1 *Transition to neo-Leninism*

Some historians argue that Brezhnev was aware of the need for reforms at the end of his life again. And my discourse analysis confirms it. Two months before his death, he addressed the topic at a Politburo session, supporting Andropov's ideas as well as the latter's reform-minded fellows. Brezhnev discussed a plan to establish a special body to deal with economic reforms with Gorbachev who was Politburo's youngest member and served as a secretary responsible for agriculture at that time.<sup>985</sup> In addition, the old general secretary tolerated a number of economic experiments with the aim to test innovative approaches. In this regard, the chosen method resembled China's pattern of experimentation before acceptance and possible global implementation.

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<sup>984</sup> Ding (1994), p. 298.

<sup>985</sup> Vashchuk (2015), pp. 22-23.

Experiments were carried out in peripheries (Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Ukraine), limited branches, or enterprises. Estonia started to lease small service industries to the employees, while VAZ car manufacturer, whose enterprises were located in Ukraine, were allowed to keep their profits after tax deduction. Zlobin contract brigade method, in turn, consisted in linking payments with the performance of a financially autonomous brigade in the construction industry. More importantly, the so-called Shchekino method was to raise economic efficiency and labour productivity through material incentives. Managers were authorised to optimise the labour force, dismiss redundant workers without the obligation to secure them another job, and use the savings to bonuses for the remaining employees. The method was introduced in a chemical plant near Tula in 1967 for the first time and was applied in 10 per cent of all enterprises by 1980.<sup>986</sup> In 1983, an experiment based on a reduction of obligatory indicators and increases in bonuses and other material incentives was launched. It applied to 21 branch ministries covering 12 per cent of Soviet industrial production. The results were, however, unsatisfactory, mostly due to the absence of a wide political consensus and the lack of motivation on the part of the central ministries.<sup>987</sup>

Unlike Brezhnev and Chernenko, Andropov was willing to invest his political capital in reform.<sup>988</sup> Fedor Burlatskii, who accompanied him on his trips to Yugoslavia and Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s as his subordinate in the Liaison Department, noticed Andropov's interest in local reforms, especially the Hungarian ones.<sup>989</sup> The author thus indicates that Iurii Vladimirovich tended to unorthodox thinking for decades. He was a workaholic with unordinary features in comparison with most other Russian and Soviet leaders. Burlatskii argues that the Russian political culture has usually produced two types of politicians, that is, ideologists and soldiers, while Andropov could combine these characteristics with intellectual leanings and organisational skills.<sup>990</sup> Moreover, he was familiar with foreign policy as well as military issues thanks to sources from the KGB. Andropov had professional experience in the party apparatus and enjoyed broad support among the party and state officials.<sup>991</sup> Andropov's election was welcomed by a large majority of

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<sup>986</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 79-81; Sakwa (1998), pp. 226-227.

<sup>987</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 81-82.

<sup>988</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 309.

<sup>989</sup> Burlatskii (1996), p. 191.

<sup>990</sup> Burlatskii (1990), p. 360.

<sup>991</sup> Dobrynin (1995), p. 513. Andropov was widely respected within the KGB as well. Nikolai Leonov, a high-level KGB official, argues that the operation of the intelligence service improved considerably thanks to Andropov and adds that the latter allowed officials to think independently and discuss the relevant issues freely. The KGB chairman and future general secretary also pursued a strict cadre policy focused on qualification, knowledge and education along with an active cooperation with academicians and state

society and the new general secretary became very popular soon.<sup>992</sup> Nikolai Ryzhkov, Gorbachev's prime minister, considered Andropov period to be the beginning of Soviet perestroika and believed that the Andropovian reforms would have been largely modelled on China with the central role of the state and the Communist Party.<sup>993</sup> This perspective was shared by Luk'ianov, Nenashev as well as Vorotnikov, according to whom perestroika was initiated by Andropov in 1983.<sup>994</sup>

Luk'ianov argues that perestroika was meant as a rejuvenation of socialism through people's self-management, socialist market and revived socialist morality, and had Andropov been given a chance to conduct reforms for several years, no collapse would have been occurred.<sup>995</sup> Shakhnazarov presents a nuanced perspective on Andropov according to which the general secretary was convinced that economic reforms along with an improvement of living standards had to come first while democratisation and liberalisation would follow later and in a limited form.<sup>996</sup> These assessments are in stark contrast to Iakovlev's point of view. This liberal socialist argues that Andropov's reformism was a guise hiding his strong conservatism and inclination to repression.<sup>997</sup> Such an argumentation corresponds with Iakovlev's interests and mindset which made giving Andropov, Ryzhkov or Ligachev credit for initiating perestroika impossible. Similarly, Medvedev associates the beginning of perestroika with the plenum of the Central Committee in 1987, which launched a political reform and a comprehensive economic reform beyond the acceleration programme.<sup>998</sup> Cherniaev also rejects to perceive Andropov as Gorbachev's reform predecessor, arguing that he only wished to improve the system, holding the Brezhnevite line.<sup>999</sup> At the same time, however, he managed to recognise Andropov's positive role.<sup>1000</sup> This interpretation is close to Gorbachev's one which is based on the appreciation of Andropov's

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officials (Leonov, 1995, pp. 100-105). Such a positive assessment is shared by Kriuchkov who served as an assistant to the Central Committee's secretary Andropov since 1965, following him to the KGB two years later (Kriuchkov, 1997, p. 42). Bovin also highlights a free character of discussions under Andropov's supervision (Bovin, 2003, p. 244).

<sup>992</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 393.

<sup>993</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), pp. 314-315.

<sup>994</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 88; Vorotnikov (2003), p. 26.

<sup>995</sup> Luk'ianov (1993), pp. 6-7, 174-175.

<sup>996</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 111.

<sup>997</sup> Iakovlev (1994), pp. 228-239.

<sup>998</sup> Medvedev (1994), p. 42.

<sup>999</sup> Cherniaev (1995), p. 450.

<sup>1000</sup> Cherniaev (2008), p. 549.

overall positive role but concurrent conviction that he would not have been able to launch a radical reform.<sup>1001</sup>

In 1983, a special Politburo commission on economic reform was set up under the tutelage of Ryzhkov. He would use the findings and staff of the commission once he was appointed the prime minister somewhat later, which confirmed the continuity of the reform economic course.<sup>1002</sup> I will show below that Ryzhkov understood the relevance of the Chinese experience and he strove to implement China's reform model under Gorbachev. Andropov was not given much time to carry out large-scale reforms, whatever they may have been. Yet he started to take initial steps. General secretary focused on the fight against corruption and low discipline which were seen as the immediate causes of the bad economic performance. Up to 20 per cent of regional first secretaries, 22 per cent of members of the Council of Ministers, and a whole range of high-level officials of the Secretariat were replaced by the end of 1983.<sup>1003</sup> Andropov promoted reform-minded functionaries such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Egor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Eduard Shevardnadze, Geidar Aliev or Viktor Chebrikov who was appointed Chairman of the KGB.<sup>1004</sup> Burlatskii recalls that the general secretary paid special attention to cooperation between Gorbachev and Ligachev, which seemed paradoxical given considerable differences between both men, particularly, in character and mindset. Nevertheless, Andropov's stake proved right for Ligachev eventually became Gorbachev's deputy who managed the party issues on a daily basis, presided over the Secretariat sessions and over the Politburo if the general secretary was absent.<sup>1005</sup> Andropov also highlighted and revived the concept of glasnost'.

Adjustments in the economic sphere began with the Law on Labour Collectives from 1983. The latter introduced organisational changes and limited self-management. The production in enterprises was to be based on the *brigade* system within which the brigade decided on the allocation of tasks and distribution of pay. Workers were to participate in some management decisions (dismissals, housing allocation, appointment of lower-level managers), regular meetings of labour collectives became obligatory, and workers' bodies gained a consultative role

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<sup>1001</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), pp. 223, 247.

<sup>1002</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 84.

<sup>1003</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 339.

<sup>1004</sup> Shevardnadze's promotion, which culminated in his appointment to the position of foreign minister was probably connected with the fact that Georgia was famous for experimenting with economic reforms, including the implementation of market mechanisms (Shevardnadze, 2009, p. 71).

<sup>1005</sup> Burlatskii (1996), pp. 197-198; Dobrynin (1995), p. 617. Both Ligachev's supporters and opponents agree that he was hardworking and disciplined but his problem was that he exerted excessive pressure on others, intervening in their affairs, whereby he made enemies (Vorotnikov, 2003, p. 218).

in enterprise policies. Agricultural production, in turn, was to be centred around the *link* system—groups consisting of 50 to 100 workers were provided with land, equipment, and seeds and were paid by the results, being allowed to keep all profit from surpluses.<sup>1006</sup> The reform measures were thus aimed to strengthen the efficiency and use the full potential of the existing model (anti-corruption campaign, reorganisations) in conjunction with concurrent introduction of innovations (the 1983 experiment entailing greater autonomy of production units and higher material incentives, economic democratisation, glasnost') and gradual preparations of larger-scale reforms.

Positive evaluation of Andropov's policies contrasts with the neo-Stalinist discourse. Grishin, who can be considered its representative, saw the real cause of the problems in reform experiments and measures including the increase in prices, larger autonomy for SOEs, establishment of cooperatives, and glasnost'. Paradoxically, Grishin criticises Andropov for the alleged restoration of Stalinist practices within the KGB and elimination of political control over the security bodies, labelling this reform-minded general secretary "conservative" and "orthodox".<sup>1007</sup> Such an evaluation is in breach of Ryzhkov's experience. In 1983, Andropov asked Ryzhkov to explain him the concept of concessions and joint ventures, which were far from orthodox.<sup>1008</sup> Similarly, Andropov sanctified the establishment of special economic zones under two union ministries and three republican ministries in Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine with a full *khozraschet*. Finally, the general secretary had a different perspective on the Soviet bloc and Moscow's role in it than the neo-Stalinist idea of socialist internationalism.<sup>1009</sup> Therefore, Grishin-like interpretations are rather misleading.

Konstantin Chernenko, in turn, was not an ardent adherent of perestroika. He was never engaged in economic policy and acknowledged his lack of expertise in the field. According to Ligachev, the new general secretary was not prepared for the highest position, having, nevertheless, positive character features and not being involved in corruption and nepotism around Brezhnev.<sup>1010</sup> Chernenko got the credit for his performance as the head of the General Department. This department played a crucial role in the intraparty processes, for it gathered all information sent to the political leadership, analysing and classifying them, and controlled the implementation of

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<sup>1006</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 171; Sakwa (1998), p. 74.

<sup>1007</sup> Grishin (1996), pp. 55-56, 60-61.

<sup>1008</sup> The concept of joint ventures with capitalist enterprises was worked up by the Institute of the U.S. and Canada in the second half of the 1970s (Arbatov, 2002, p. 141).

<sup>1009</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), pp. 50-51.

<sup>1010</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 34-35.

approved decisions.<sup>1011</sup> The party support was demonstrated by that he remained the head of the department even after becoming a full member of the Politburo. Chernenko was thus the only member who managed a department in the Central Committee.<sup>1012</sup> Ryzhkov notes that Chernenko enjoyed the full backing of old Brezhnev's cadres such as Viktor Grishin, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, Vladimir Shcherbitskii, Nikolai Tikhonov and Dmitrii Ustinov. Chernenko's election was also facilitated by the fact that he usually presided over the Secretariat's sessions under Andropov as well as by the absence of a consensus on a suitable younger candidate.<sup>1013</sup> The "old guard" was afraid of a new Khrushchchev who could cause serious damage by his adventurism and unpredictability. The "interregnum" provided the Politburo with time for seeking an eligible man.<sup>1014</sup>

Notwithstanding Chernenko disapproved of Andropov's style of governance including an investigation of Brezhnev's favourites, and protégés as well as the promotion of younger and reform-minded cadres such as Gorbachev, Ligachev, Ryzhkov and Aliev, he proved to be pragmatic enough to cooperate with Gorbachev, charging him to preside over the sessions of the Secretariat.<sup>1015</sup> During Chernenko's short tenure, the supreme political bodies started to malfunction due to general secretary's frequent absence. Nonetheless, Chernenko did not put an end to the preparation of reforms which started under Andropov and tolerated reform-oriented initiatives including the work of a group headed by Gorbachev and consisting of Bikkenin, Boldin, Iakovlev and Medvedev whose aim was to further develop ideological issues.<sup>1016</sup> In February 1984 the general secretary declared that the economic experiments would continue and announced the need for adjustments in the operation of the Politburo, Supreme Soviet and local soviets along with strengthening control and supervision as well as improving cadre policy.<sup>1017</sup> In September the acceleration policy was announced based on a conception elaborated by Aganbegian and his Novosibirsk institute.<sup>1018</sup> Acceleration was mentioned by Andropov and subsequently discussed by relevant organs so Chernenko could have followed this line. A government commission approved the *Concept of Improving Economic Management*, which envisaged a division of state

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<sup>1011</sup> Pribytkov (2002), p. 21.

<sup>1012</sup> Pribytkov (2002), p. 64.

<sup>1013</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), p. 57. Despite that, Gorbachev considered Ustinov the most appropriate successor, for he was presumably able to follow Andropov's course (Gorbachev, 1995a, p. 248).

<sup>1014</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), pp. 244-245.

<sup>1015</sup> Pribytkov (2002), pp. 127-135.

<sup>1016</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), p. 253.

<sup>1017</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), p. 47.

<sup>1018</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 355-358.

ownership into the Union, republican and municipal one, development of cooperative property, and legalisation of individual property with a ban on hiring labour force. According to a high-level government official Igor' Prostiakov, the plan was based on the idea of a socialist market, which went far beyond the Kosygin reform.<sup>1019</sup> Already in the spring of 1984, Politburo discussed the expansion of cooperatives and individual labour activities.<sup>1020</sup> Both elements would be implemented under Gorbachev.

Jerry Hough argues that Gorbachev's election as general secretary was not a surprise, for he was responsible for personnel policy under both Andropov and Chernenko, which gave him an opportunity to create a power base in the Central Committee in accordance with what the American political scientist calls a circular flow of power.<sup>1021</sup> Hough's assertion coincides with Ryzhkov's memories according to which there was no substantial political struggle for the top position.<sup>1022</sup> Grishin observes that Gorbachev became increasingly active under Chernenko and succeeded in forming his power base in the highest echelons inclusive of Ligachev, Ryzhkov, Chebrikov and Solomentsev. His proactivity contrasted with earlier behaviour, allegedly typical of formalism, lack of own initiative, and certain narrow-mindedness.<sup>1023</sup> Similarly, Brutents asserts that Gorbachev was rather undistinguished without noticeable successes and ideas.<sup>1024</sup> This perspective contrasts with Cherniaev's one. The latter met Gorbachev as a member of a party delegation to Belgium in 1972 and told Ponomarev that Mikhail Sergeevich could be a useful man for relations with foreign parties, referring to his behaviour which was largely independent of the older rules and based on common sense and rationality.<sup>1025</sup> According to Boldin, Gorbachev understood that he had to become competent in other fields beyond agriculture for the simple reason that a failure of a new agricultural policy would have destroyed his career prospects. Thanks to the good relations with Andropov, his role in the Politburo was gradually strengthening, which started to threaten Chernenko. Andropov set the young politician tasks beyond his formal powers including economic, organisational, and staff issues. The general secretary even asked

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<sup>1019</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), pp. 103-104.

<sup>1020</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 17-18.

<sup>1021</sup> Hough (1997), p. 63. By the same token, Nenashev argues that there was nothing extraordinary in Gorbachev's rise. His promotion was in line with the precedent-based convention and intraparty rules. In 1978 he was elected the secretary of agriculture and Nenashev believes that it was so because his predecessor Fedor Kulakov held the same position and came from the same kraikom of Stavropol'. Similarly, Chernenko became the general secretary largely because Andropov did not manage to replace him during his tenure (Nenashev, 1993, pp. 343-344).

<sup>1022</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), p. 79.

<sup>1023</sup> Grishin (1996), pp. 69-70.

<sup>1024</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 60.

<sup>1025</sup> Cherniaev (1993), pp. 8, 21.

him to present a paper in one of the Central Committee's plenums, which might have indicated that he could become the next leader.<sup>1026</sup>

At the same time, Boldin denies the existence of any Andropov's instructions regarding his successor, observing no special bond between the two men.<sup>1027</sup> Gorbachev's long-term assistant adds that Chernenko disliked Gorbachev but the latter enjoyed support from Ustinov who convinced the old general secretary to appoint Mikhail Sergeevich a head of the Secretariat. The Politburo members' attitude towards Gorbachev was gradually improving except for Tikhonov.<sup>1028</sup> A significant event was a conference on ideology where man number two delivered a keynote speech. Gorbachev not only addressed reform policies but became well-known among the entire party and economic elites.<sup>1029</sup> In addition, an important role in Gorbachev's smooth election was played by Gromyko who expressed his full support for the young candidate.<sup>1030</sup> Iakovlev testifies that there were talks between Iakovlev as a close aide to Gorbachev and Anatolii Gromyko about the former's candidature. Both Gorbachev and Anatolii's father were familiar with these negotiations, so it was quite natural for Iakovlev when Gromyko backed Gorbachev.<sup>1031</sup> Kriuchkov confirms Gromyko's role in the process, adding, however, that the former foreign minister started to regret his support no later than since early 1988.<sup>1032</sup>

Boldin argues that Gorbachev's problem was that he had experience only with work in the party apparatus, which did not contribute to a solid and resilient personality. Once problems appeared, he switched to other issues.<sup>1033</sup> Gorbachev was an amateur in economic issues just as his predecessors were. He was less experienced and economically educated than many of his rivals, including Grigorii Romanov, a secretary of the Central Committee who made a career as the first secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee where he supervised innovative economic initiatives. According to some sources, Romanov was Brezhnev's preferred candidate for the

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<sup>1026</sup> The general secretary also charged him to prepare reports on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lenin's death and 113<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the latter's birth. Gorbachev recalls how far-reaching impacts these cases had on him, for he was given an opportunity to be concerned with works of the late Lenin in which he identified the topics of people's creative activity and democracy. These became central to Gorbachev's notion of perestroika (Gorbachev, 1995a, pp. 235-236; Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002, p. 51).

<sup>1027</sup> Boldin (2003), pp. 33, 45-54. Shevardnadze is of the opposite attitude, arguing that Andropov wanted Gorbachev to become his successor (Shevardnadze, 2009, p. 69).

<sup>1028</sup> Boldin (2003), pp. 58-61.

<sup>1029</sup> Boldin (2003), pp. 68-72.

<sup>1030</sup> Ligachev (1993), p. 72.

<sup>1031</sup> Iakovlev (2000), pp. 442-443.

<sup>1032</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), pp. 253-254.

<sup>1033</sup> Boldin (2003), p. 105.

leader of the Party in the 1970s.<sup>1034</sup> Baibakov recalls that he offered Gorbachev a job in Gosplan in 1976 when the latter was the first secretary in Stavropol'. Gorbachev refused the offer, referring to own incompetence in economic affairs.<sup>1035</sup> Gorbachev's ignorance of economics told on the fact that he did not present any concrete and comprehensive plan of economic reform while giving preference to foreign policy or political reforms. It follows that the general secretary was excessively dependent on his advisors whose majority tended to liberal socialist discourse and Westernism and labelled their opponents as conservatives, thereby deepening Gorbachev's *idée fixe* about permanent obstructionism on the part of the state and party apparatuses as well as Ryzhkov's cabinet.<sup>1036</sup>

### 6.3.2 *Economic reforms*

In the first months and years, Gorbachev mostly followed the neo-Leninist discourse, which started to dominate under Andropov and coincided with China's reform pattern in many respects. Ryzhkov notes that the general secretary's April declaration on perestroika only reiterated the reform design existing since 1983 and announced democratisation and *glasnost'* were not to change the political system substantially.<sup>1037</sup> Cherniaev admits that Gorbachev understood perestroika in terms of perfection of socialism within the existing socioeconomic model at least until the end of 1986.<sup>1038</sup> The leader's report to the plenum of the Central Committee in April 1985 put forward following priorities: (1) *acceleration* of growth and *scientific and technological progress*, intensification of economy, perestroika of governance, planning, structural and investment policies, improvement of discipline and work methods; (2) improvement of central planning while giving enterprises more autonomy through *khozraschet*; (3) improvement of living standards, harmonious development of individuals and strengthening social justice in redistribution; (4) *glasnost'*; and (5) civilised interstate relations based on genuine respect for international law.<sup>1039</sup> Similarity between Gorbachev's acceleration and Dengism was emphasised by Troianovskii who was observing the Chinese reforms from within for many

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<sup>1034</sup> Khanin (2008), pp. 341-342.

<sup>1035</sup> Baibakov (1998), p. 299.

<sup>1036</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 104-105; Khanin (2008), p. 357. Similarly, Boldin stresses that Gorbachev did not have a comprehensive conception of perestroika (Boldin, 2003, p. 4). The absence of any blueprint of reforms was admitted by Ryzhkov at the 1st Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 (Ryzhkov, 1989, p. 6).

<sup>1037</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), pp. 271-272. By early 1987, Ryzhkov himself related the economic reform with democratisation but rather in the economic field. In that sense, it was supported by other neo-Leninists as well (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 122).

<sup>1038</sup> Cherniaev (1993), p. 126.

<sup>1039</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), pp. 11-12.

years.<sup>1040</sup> Indeed, Mikhail Sergeevich himself asserts that he wanted to modernise the economy first in order to create favourable conditions for a radical reform by the early 1990s.<sup>1041</sup> Gorbachev admits that he examined the materials of the 13<sup>th</sup> CPC Congress with interest and that the agenda set by the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress was similar.<sup>1042</sup>

The initial focus on fighting corruption and poor discipline (through such measures as anti-alcohol campaign or quality controls), administrative reorganisation (the establishment of “superministries” to handle large sectors of economy), personnel purges and moderate economic adjustments (acceleration of scientific and technological progress as well as socioeconomic development) followed Andropov’s policies.<sup>1043</sup> The 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress in 1986 replaced 44 per cent of the members of the Central Committee, which built on preceding “purge” in 1982–1985 when around 90 per cent of the obkom and kraikom secretaries along with many first secretaries in autonomous republics and regions were dismissed.<sup>1044</sup> At the event, Gorbachev referred positively to a certain role of market mechanisms, cooperative property as well as the lease of the means of production including land to brigades, links and families.<sup>1045</sup> The Congress reaffirmed the strategy of acceleration of socioeconomic development and technological progress presented a year before. Vadim Medvedev—in full accordance with Gorbachev—described the goals of the acceleration as follows: “It was intended, on the basis of the latest stage of the technological revolution, to retool major sectors of the economy, increase economic efficiency and create the preconditions for a qualitative improvement of the standard of living. The second component in the strategy of acceleration was a structural change in the economy: priority development of sectors, defining the technological level of society, de-emphasising extractive sectors and stressing resource-saving technologies, overcoming the hypertrophy of heavy industry and establishing a modern consumer sector and a modern social infrastructure. The third component of the acceleration strategy was improving the system of

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<sup>1040</sup> Troianovskii (1997), p. 360. A reception of the Chinese reforms on the part of the new Soviet leaders could have been hindered by the heritage and inertia of Rakhmanin’s narrative on China. At the Interkit meeting in February 1985, this Soviet official criticised the Chinese economic reforms and argued that they had restored elements of capitalism in the country, enabling the “capitalist penetration” (*Note from a Working Meeting*, 1982). According to a Hungarian participant, Rakhmanin summed up the socioeconomic development in the Asian country in the following way: “A capitalist or semi-capitalist way of living has been adopted by 200 million Chinese today. China’s foreign policy harms the international interests of socialism and directly affects the security of the Soviet Union and its allies” (Kótai, 1985).

<sup>1041</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), p. 337.

<sup>1042</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), p. 432.

<sup>1043</sup> Alekseev (2020), p. 45; Hanson (2014), pp. 186-187; Khanin (2008), p. 364.

<sup>1044</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 65; Sakwa (1998), p. 154.

<sup>1045</sup> Hough (1997), p. 108.

management and the economic mechanism so as to facilitate the implementation of the first two components.”<sup>1046</sup>

According to Pavlov, the implementation of market mechanisms was the objective since the early stages of Gorbachev’s perestroika. Preparatory work started under Yakovlev’s supervision in autumn 1986 and the transition to the market was conceptualised in terms of “commodity-money relations”.<sup>1047</sup> Pavlov, who was responsible for finance, credit and money areas, remembers that Yakovlev pressed the team to be more radical in their thinking and proposals and Pavlov appreciated such an unorthodox attitude then. The chairman of the State Committee on Prices (Goskomtsen) advocated income differentiation as well as the legalisation of private business activities. At the same time, private ownership should have been developed parallel to the state one as its supplement, especially in light industry and services. Pavlov agrees with both Gorbachev and Yakovlev that the state and party apparatus were restrained about market and entrepreneurship and a part of the bureaucracy opposed it actively.<sup>1048</sup>

Let me focus on the individual areas where reform measures began to be implemented. The initial steps in reforming *agriculture* were aimed at the expansion of the autonomous link system paired with lease-based agriculture, which put the extremely sensitive question of collective farming somewhat aside. Collectivisation continued to be one of the keystones of the Soviet economy and perestroika should not have breached this principle substantially. The link system was very similar to China’s household responsibility system within which land remained in collective ownership and de-collectivisation was thus only partial. The transition to lease-based agriculture was accompanied by the dissolution of several central bodies and replaced with the State Committee for the Agro-Industrial Complex. This restructuring was meant to weaken the possible opposition from the existing administrative, economic, and party structures. These innovations were followed by increases in state subsidies as a result of a power compromise with the

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<sup>1046</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), p. 126; Gorbachev & Mlynář (2002), p. 67.

<sup>1047</sup> From Yakovlev’s perspective, the Stalinist dogma of incompatibility of socialism and market had to be overcome and a conception of a socialist market was to be elaborated. The socialist market, at the same time, was not to entail such features of capitalism as unemployment, unlimited competition and the lack of regulation. In an interview with Cohen, Yakovlev depicted the goal in the following way: “We want the Soviet market to be formed as a result of the activity of state enterprises, expanded cooperatives and individual economic activity. They will be competitive elements of the socialist market” (Cohen, 1989, p. 57).

<sup>1048</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 38-44.

agricultural complex. The latter also succeeded in pushing through legislation prohibiting bankruptcy.<sup>1049</sup>

Despite such compromises and obstacles, a law on leasing was eventually passed in 1989. It is worth noting that Gorbachev was positive about the agricultural reform in China. Boldin recalls that the general secretary praised the lease in the Chinese agriculture and believed that it would have solved the problem of productivity and production within two years.<sup>1050</sup> Similarly, he made positive remarks about the Chinese agriculture in a speech at the All-Union Congress of Kolkhozniki in March 1988 and a Politburo meeting in July that year.<sup>1051</sup> Miller argues that the agriculture systems were very similar to each other in both countries by 1991, being based upon individual household farming.<sup>1052</sup> It is important to mention that the lease and the introduction of the autonomous link system was also supported by “conservative” Ligachev even though in a somewhat limited form, for he emphasised the voluntary character of the new model and the concurrent preservation of kolkhozy and sovkhozy.<sup>1053</sup>

The work on preparing the framework for *individual labour activity* resulted in the adoption of a corresponding law in November 1986. Although the right to non-state work was guaranteed by the 1977 Constitution, its scope was very limited and hiring labour force strictly prohibited. In reality, however, illegal work provided up to half of all consumer services and the shadow sector was quickly developing.<sup>1054</sup> At a Politburo meeting in March 1986, Gorbachev criticised widespread negative attitudes towards individual labour activity and farming, advocating liberalisation measures.<sup>1055</sup> The new legislation expanded the area of legal individual work and applied to all people without formal employment such as students, housewives and pensioners, that is, up to some 20 per cent of the population. Family businesses were allowed, but the ban on hiring employees remained in force unlike China where the latter was permitted.<sup>1056</sup> The effect of the law was also mitigated by wide discretion on the part of the local authorities which were authorised to set a high progressive income tax reaching 65 per cent. These factors contributed

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<sup>1049</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 132-133.

<sup>1050</sup> Boldin (2003), pp. 103-104.

<sup>1051</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 405; Hanson (2014), p. 215. At one of the Politburo meetings in July 1987, Gorbachev evaluated the Chinese reforms *in toto* in positive terms (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 210).

<sup>1052</sup> Miller (2016), p. 143.

<sup>1053</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 448.

<sup>1054</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 88-89.

<sup>1055</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 27.

<sup>1056</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 90-91.

to a relatively slow growth of the number of self-employed persons. The figure was 100,000 in 1985, while it amounted to 673,000 in 1990. Many people remained in a shadow economy, enabling them to earn much more money. At the same time, the ban on hiring labour force was circumvented by establishing cooperatives which enjoyed very favourable conditions.<sup>1057</sup>

In 1987, the reform endeavour focused on *state-owned enterprises*, which constituted the backbone of the Soviet economy. Evgenii Iasin, a prominent economist from the Soviet Academy of Sciences, considered the Law on State Enterprises a turning point of perestroika.<sup>1058</sup> But both its drafting and implementation aroused conflicts within the leadership. Ryzhkov, for instance, disputed with Gorbachev because the latter tended to give up central instruments to regulate the enterprises without creating a new regulatory framework.<sup>1059</sup> Indeed, the records from June Politburo sessions show that the general secretary argued in favour of a quick and radical reform, referring to the model which was implemented by pre-revolutionary Minister of Finance and Prime Minister Sergei Witte.<sup>1060</sup> Similarly to the Kosygin reform, the 1987 law was to expand autonomy, strengthen *khozraschet* and open the way to decentralisation of the economy. The central commands were to be gradually substituted for “state orders” for output, enterprises were authorised to set their own annual and five-year plans and keep profit minus taxes, and the number of centrally set indicators was reduced.

However, the progress was not as considerable as expected. Miller argues that the legislation was unclear and ambiguous in many points, lacking a clear distinction between command and order. The extreme discretion in imposing profit taxes enabled the central bodies to seize a substantial part of the profits (up to 90 per cent).<sup>1061</sup> According to Hanson, the state orders were to cover 50–60 per cent of industrial production and to be gradually reduced to 25 per cent in 1990 while being accompanied by a price reform. However, the state plan for 1988 showed that *goszakazy* would play a much more important role.<sup>1062</sup> Despite these reservations, the number of centrally distributed resources dropped from 5,100 items before the reform to 546 ones in 1989 so enterprises had to get the rest on the wholesale market.<sup>1063</sup> Furthermore, the 1987 law widened

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<sup>1057</sup> Khanin (2008), p. 367; Khanin (2010), p. 20.

<sup>1058</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 196.

<sup>1059</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 84.

<sup>1060</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), pp. 191-192. It did not prevent Gorbachev from saying to the heads of the CC departments a month later that perestroika would require at least 10 but perhaps up to 30 years to be carried out (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 202).

<sup>1061</sup> Miller (2016), p. 95.

<sup>1062</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 198.

<sup>1063</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 51.

the powers of management in organisational affairs. Enterprises were allowed to establish joint ventures, merge with each other, and conclude contracts with individual businessmen and cooperatives. Finally, elements of economic democracy were introduced. The employees were given the right to elect their management including directors with certain limitations.<sup>1064</sup>

The results of the latter experiment were, nonetheless, negative in economic terms. It turned out that the economic democracy entailed populism, lower quality of personnel, and deterioration of work ethic. Employees tended to vote for increases in wages to the detriment of profitability, investment, and long-term economic goals, which not only damaged individual enterprises but also stimulated inflation.<sup>1065</sup> Khanin, nevertheless, asserts that this kind of economic democracy was introduced mostly in small and medium-sized SOEs and did not become a strategic priority of the party leadership.<sup>1066</sup> The documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference in 1988 show that the self-management was not considered an important instrument in the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union any longer. Already by March 1987, Iakovlev warned the Politburo that people did not understand self-management and they did not want to bear responsibility either.<sup>1067</sup> Ryzhkov admits that the idea of self-management was a naïve mistake, for the political leadership underestimated the risk of populism.<sup>1068</sup>

Aside from the abovementioned side effects, the gradual implementation of the law on state enterprises was accompanied by accelerating capital spending just as in agriculture. However, the efficiency of such large financial infusions was low in correlation with productivity and output.<sup>1069</sup> Another weak point of this economic policy was that prices continued to be set centrally. “As a result, most Soviet factories simply stopped making low margin consumer items and massive shortages of everyday items quickly set in (e.g., salt, sugar, matches, cooking oil, washing powder, baby clothes, etc.). By mid-1989, coal miners in Donbass had no soap to wash with after a long day in the mines, a development that triggered massive strikes and a coalition of workers and intellectuals against the Soviet system and Gorbachev himself.”<sup>1070</sup> The expanding inflation and indebtedness together with the deterioration of goods supplies and growing

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<sup>1064</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 197.

<sup>1065</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 86.

<sup>1066</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 78.

<sup>1067</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 150.

<sup>1068</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), p. 168.

<sup>1069</sup> Miller (2016), p. 96.

<sup>1070</sup> Lynch (2012).

weakness of the central authorities eventually brought back the spectre of the 1962 Novocherkassk riots which Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev feared alike.

The reform covered *external economic relations* as well. The most important changes were the liberalisation of external trade, legalisation of joint ventures, and the establishment of SEZs. The Soviet policies coincided with the Chinese pattern in all these points, albeit differences existed. Before these reforms, external trade was severely restricted by the state monopoly. Since 1986, the monopoly started to be loosened. By 1988, up to 55 branch ministries and 140 enterprises were allowed to engage in foreign trade without limitations. Republics and provinces were granted this right in the same year. The process culminated in 1989 when all economic subjects were authorised to do business abroad on condition that the latter was necessary for their production and operation. Even though it applied to 30,000 enterprises at the beginning of 1991, the actual number of such companies fluctuated around 10,000 subjects, which indicates a quite high level of passivity on the part of the Soviet enterprises.<sup>1071</sup> Their possibilities were, nevertheless, narrowed by relatively low competitiveness, inexperience and structural obstacles at the international level. These were to be eliminated through a gradual integration into international economic institutions such as GATT. The accession to the agreement, however, never occurred—the country was granted observer status in 1990 only, even though it expressed its interest in joining the GATT officially already in 1986.<sup>1072</sup>

Since 1987, the Soviet subjects were allowed to set up *joint ventures* with partners from capitalist countries provided that the Soviet side's share on capital and management accounted for at least 50 per cent (this limit was later lifted). The advantages of this business arrangement were low taxes, guarantees against confiscation of property, the absence of state orders as well as the possibility to transfer a part of the income abroad. Notwithstanding these privileges, the sector was developing slowly. According to Khanin, there were 23 joint ventures in 1987 and 2,623 ones in 1990.<sup>1073</sup> Hanson cites somewhat more optimistic statistics, according to which the total number amounted to 2,905 companies. Irrespective of such differences, many of the subjects were not active or were only marginal.<sup>1074</sup> Pei asserts that their contribution to the Soviet GNP equalled a mere 0.2–0.3 per cent per annum on average.<sup>1075</sup> The problems were caused by non-convertibility of ruble and the related impossibility to assess the real volume of mutual

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<sup>1071</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 52.

<sup>1072</sup> Communication from the USSR (1986).

<sup>1073</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 58.

<sup>1074</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 201.

<sup>1075</sup> Pei (1994), p. 145.

investment together with the restrictions imposed by the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control. These factors were not outweighed by such merits as relatively low wage expenses or high quality of Soviet labour force sufficiently.<sup>1076</sup>

Interestingly, Moscow did not revive the early Soviet practice of providing foreign subjects with concessions that enabled full ownership in foreign hands.<sup>1077</sup> It changed only in late 1990 when the presidential degree permitted foreign subjects to establish enterprises without any Soviet share.<sup>1078</sup> The Chinese legislation was considerably more flexible and favourable for non-Chinese companies. The Asian country served as an inspiration for the idea of special economic zones which were developing tumultuously in China. Gorbachev's advisor Evgenii Primakov visited the country's SEZs and the head of the government Nikolai Ryzhkov explicitly called for drawing positive lessons from China (not only) in this regard. In December 1988, the Soviet Council of Ministers decided to establish the zones in Estonia, Leningrad and Vladivostok. Companies could have enjoyed a reduced 30-per cent tax and subsidised rents and loans. But the USSR had several disadvantages compared to its Asian neighbour including a poor legal framework, higher wage expenses, lacking infrastructure, and finally geographical distance from economic hubs. In contrast to China, local authorities were put in charge of both the construction of infrastructure and bureaucratic agenda, which resulted in a high degree of inefficiency, incompetence, and shortage of resources.<sup>1079</sup>

The development of *cooperatives* was more successful and radical at the same time. The law passed in 1988 provided cooperatives with a wide array of advantages and legal as well as economic possibilities to conduct business. This form of association was exempt from the state planning system, enjoying lower taxes, and the upper limit for the number of members was not set at all. Cooperatives were allowed to hire workers, issue shares and bonds, purchase inputs freely and sell products at their own prices, establish associations with other legal persons, or participate in foreign trade. Their operation did not need to be approved by local authorities, nevertheless, obstacles did exist and the party-state apparatus attempted to limit the profits by price controls.<sup>1080</sup> Despite that, cooperatives became very popular in various fields starting from restaurants, hairdressers and construction companies and ending with banks and consulting firms. Khanin presents the following data: There were 13,900 cooperatives with 155,900 members

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<sup>1076</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 62.

<sup>1077</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 58.

<sup>1078</sup> Communication from the USSR (1990).

<sup>1079</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 112-116.

<sup>1080</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 249.

in 1987, but after the new law was passed, the number increased to 77,500 cooperatives and 1,396,500 members in 1988, reaching 245,400 subjects with 6,100,000 people in 1991.<sup>1081</sup>

The negative effects were not negligible at the same time. The legislation did not define clear borders for the legal activities of cooperatives, did not introduce effective state control mechanisms, and delineated boundaries between cooperatives and SOEs in a sufficient way either. In fact, most cooperatives (up to 80 per cent) were affiliates of SOEs, 60 per cent of the fixed assets of cooperatives were property leased from SOEs, while the latter provided cooperatives with more than 60 per cent of raw materials and other inputs. In terms of production, around 70 per cent of gross output was produced by SOEs-affiliated cooperatives in 1989.<sup>1082</sup> Khanin estimates that 70 per cent of SOEs' production was sold by cooperatives. Due to the loose legal framework, cooperatives became a suitable instrument of legalisation of illegal income coming from expanding shadow economy and optimisation and tax evasion by enterprises. At the same time, cooperatives were exposed to activities of organised crime which resorted to racketeering. The forced payments to organised crime could have added up to 30 per cent of all income. The development of cooperatives also had society-wide consequences. They contributed to the considerable rise of inflation because they purchased the goods produced by SOEs reselling them at higher prices and were allowed to exchange non-cash for cash, which was forbidden to enterprises due to state control and macroeconomic stability.<sup>1083</sup> Hanson concludes that the boom of cooperatives represented a renaissance of private entrepreneurship in the Soviet Union but they did not improve the overall performance of national economy substantially. By 1990, the share of cooperatives in GNP amounted to 6.7 per cent.<sup>1084</sup>

The rise of private economic activity was accelerated by the introduction of the legal institute of *lease*. It was already mentioned in relation to the agricultural reform and interactions between enterprises and cooperatives. The transition to lease commenced with a directive on leasing SOEs to labour collectives in 1988. The law was passed in the following year and covered agriculture, industry, as well as services. The lease in agriculture can be seen as a form of hidden semi-privatisation, whereby the land was trusted to private farmers and the obligation could be inherited, although the land was not the farmer's private property *sensu stricto* and was not allowed to be a subject of trade, which agrees with the practice in China.<sup>1085</sup> A parallel process

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<sup>1081</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 23.

<sup>1082</sup> Pei (1994), pp. 124-125.

<sup>1083</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 38-42.

<sup>1084</sup> Hanson (2014), pp. 208-209.

<sup>1085</sup> Miller (2016), p. 141.

was launched in industry and services. Leasing was to be limited to small and medium-sized enterprises and the share of leased SOEs was not to exceed 20 per cent over the first six years.<sup>1086</sup> According to Khanin, the expansion of this institute was rapid. In 1990, there was 6,200 leased enterprises employing 3,600,000 people in the Soviet Union, and the leased enterprises played an important part in many industries, for instance, engineering and transportation. Their number reached 3,947 in the RSFSR only where they accounted for 13.7 per cent of industrial production and employed 5,600,000 people.<sup>1087</sup> It is worth noting that when advocating lease and individual labour along with the need for positive propaganda in favour of entrepreneurs in the Politburo in July 1988, Gorbachev referred to the achievements of Chinese reforms in the field.<sup>1088</sup>

The aforementioned legal changes constituted the basis of the economic reforms and resembled the reform pattern in China. Both countries were exposed to shakes, instability, and multiple negative side effects. The CPC, however, managed to take full control over the centrifugal processes in 1989, while the corrosion and disintegration of the Soviet system were multiplied by the launch of large-scale political and ideological restructuring. Many authors as well as active actors agree that the first years of Gorbachev's tenure remained stable and the decline started to accelerate between 1988 and 1990, while the last year of the existence of the Soviet Union brought about an economic collapse.<sup>1089</sup> Khanin argues that many indicators *per se* were not negative whatsoever for several years—agricultural production was growing until 1989, labour productivity increased by 21 per cent between 1986 and 1990 compared to 1981–1985, the rise of wages hit a record high.<sup>1090</sup> But such a growth was not accompanied by due fiscal and monetary measures including the price reform or reduction of expenditures and above all an adoption of a comprehensive, thought-out strategy. Gorbachev opted for increases in investment and subsidies as well as printing money, hoping that structural adjustments would improve efficiency and generate sufficient economic growth to cover the rising expenditures without the need of cuts and austerity measures which would arouse discontent and opposition and undermine his position.<sup>1091</sup> But this stake did not work out well for him. According to Vadim Medvedev, the fall in industrial output in early 1987 led Gorbachev to the decision to set out on a more radical path, disrupting the neo-Leninist course.<sup>1092</sup> Yet the pivot to the political reform without a new

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<sup>1086</sup> Pei (1994), p. 124.

<sup>1087</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 55-56.

<sup>1088</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), p. 397.

<sup>1089</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), p. 139.

<sup>1090</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 185-186.

<sup>1091</sup> Miller (2016), p. 73.

<sup>1092</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 193.

economic and legal basis began to undermine the position of the party and state apparatuses and provoked the overall instability.<sup>1093</sup> At the same time, Gorbachev's aversion to an unpopular price reform started to complicate his cooperation with Ryzhkov's cabinet and posed a serious macroeconomic problem.<sup>1094</sup>

Many plans of economic policies were prepared outside the party and government bodies by experts who did not bear any responsibility. Alekseev interprets this fact as a manifestation of Gorbachev's growing mistrust of Ryzhkov and his cabinet. Gorbachev often relied on a standing working group responsible for preparing economic materials for sessions of the Central Committee which operated under Iakovlev's and Medvedev's auspices.<sup>1095</sup> The general secretary became increasingly closer to Iakovlev and the liberal socialist discourse whose focus on political reform, large-scale democratisation and populist features went against the gradual, economic-oriented and centrally controlled perestroika pursued by Ryzhkov. In a Politburo session in April 1987, the prime minister addressed negative economic tendencies and called for stronger use of financial stimuli in the economy, austerity measures inclusive of cuts in the state administration, quicker transformation of enterprises to *khozraschet*, increases in taxes and prices, price reform, reduction in social benefits and development of bank and credit markets.<sup>1096</sup> However, the Plenum of the Central Committee dedicated to the economic issues held in June 1987 postponed the launch of a limited price reform until 1990.

The June plenum was a decisive moment in the perestroika process. According to Ryzhkov, this plenum finished a long phase of preparation of the government economic policies for the next five years, which envisaged, first of all, the transformation of the state enterprises and a gradual transition to a market economy in the 13<sup>th</sup> five-year plan starting from 1991 with the aim to build a socially-oriented, regulated market economy in a distant future.<sup>1097</sup> By the same token, Pavlov calls the June plenum perestroika's crucial moment while Vorotnikov compared it to the

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<sup>1093</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), p. 122.

<sup>1094</sup> Medvedev (1994), p. 54. Interestingly, Gorbachev argues in his memoirs that the postponement of the price reform was a strategic miscalculation and corroborates that the government did struggle to push the reform through. However, he blames populists and prominent academicians for obstructions and the failure with the implementation (Gorbachev, 1995a, pp. 361-363). The records from the Politburo indicates that even though the general secretary was aware of the need for the implementation of the price reform, he opposed it because of related political and reputation risks (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 180).

<sup>1095</sup> Alekseev (2020), pp. 46-47.

<sup>1096</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), pp. 164-165.

<sup>1097</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), pp. 161-163, 228.

transition to NEP.<sup>1098</sup> The crucial element of the 1987 economic reform was a gradual price liberalisation in relation to production and economic offer. Once the offer was sufficient and the market was saturated with goods, prices could have been fully liberalised. But Gorbachev hesitated to increase prices as the first step towards larger liberalisation as he did in 1982. Pavlov highlights that after the plenum, economic reforms towards the market were hindered not by “conservatives” but by Gorbachev, Iakovlev, and radicals in the first place.<sup>1099</sup> Instead of unpopular but necessary economic measures, Gorbachev together with Iakovlev focused on the political restructuring, attacking the prime minister for his alleged conservatism.<sup>1100</sup>

### 6.3.3 Political reforms

Political reforms constituted an important part of Gorbachev’s reform programme and were more successful in terms of their implementation than the economic ones. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to assert that upon his accession to power, the new general secretary was decided to carry out a kind of transition to the Western-like liberal democracy. *Tout au contraire*, Hough argues that the leader spoke rarely about democracy in 1985 and 1986, and even though he marked democracy as an essence of perestroika in 1987, he rather had *party democracy*, that is, the election of secretaries in multicandidate elections by secret ballot, in mind.<sup>1101</sup> By the same token, Vorotnikov recalls that an important part of Gorbachev’s conception of democracy was made up of *economic democracy*, particularly workers’ self-management and cooperative movement.<sup>1102</sup>

Needless to say, democracy can be conceptualised and interpreted in many ways, therefore, it is necessary to analyse the reform concepts in the historically specific context of concrete discourses whose part the narrative of democracy is. Mikhail Sergeevich asserts that the reforms began as an attempt to extricate the country from economic stagnation and democratisation did not entail the transition to political pluralism and multipartism.<sup>1103</sup> In his last article, Gorbachev admits that political reform was not on the agenda at the beginning but it became topical by 1987 when a conflict between “reform” and “anti-reform” wings of the CPSU erupted, which became less and less legitimate political force.<sup>1104</sup>

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<sup>1098</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 38-39; Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 195.

<sup>1099</sup> Pavlov (1995), p. 56.

<sup>1100</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 183-184.

<sup>1101</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 149-150.

<sup>1102</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), p. 145.

<sup>1103</sup> Gorbachev & Mlynář (2002), p. 115.

<sup>1104</sup> Gorbachev (2021).

Indeed, Gorbachev launched democratisation in a limited scope within the CPSU and some other state and social organisations such as trade unions and Komsomol. This policy was accompanied by competitive elections to local soviets, but it applied only to 5 per cent of deputy districts by 1987.<sup>1105</sup> The introduction of the competitive principle at the local level was moderate and corresponded with the partial implementation of instruments of economic democracy (self-management) in enterprises. But most of these measures *per se* could have remained limited, not going beyond the neo-Leninist discourse. The main exception was the idea of competitive elections of party officials. Hough convincingly shows that the up-down appointment of regional (*obkom*) secretaries was essential for the circular flow of power and formed the power basis of a general secretary, guaranteeing his prominent position within the Politburo and the Central Committee alike.<sup>1106</sup>

Allowing the competitive elections of regional secretaries, Gorbachev would have jeopardised his own position by weakening his control over the party level, which was crucial for the composition of the Central Committee, electing both the Politburo and general secretary. Such actions can be plausibly explained by what can be called “Khrushchev complex”. Gorbachev was afraid of an internal opposition and resistance from the Party itself and was increasingly more convinced that the existing structures both in the Party and beyond obstructed his policies and could have resorted to the removal of the general secretary as it happened to Khrushchev.<sup>1107</sup> In September 1987 Gorbachev declared that the progress of perestroika was hindered by local party actors. According to Vorotnikov, the general secretary’s position outraged the party’s rank-and-file who perceived it as the leader’s attempt to put blame for mistakes and failures at lower levels and attacks against them.<sup>1108</sup>

This line of reasoning was typical of the liberal socialist advisors to Gorbachev who managed to gain an increasing influence over the party leader. The most prominent figure of liberal socialist discourse was Iakovlev. Archival materials show that he presented radical ideas to Gorbachev even in the early phase of perestroika. In a memorandum from December 1985, Iakovlev calls for a freedom of choice within socialism, considering democracy both an instrument and the goal of socialism. He argues that the CPSU should be deprived of economic powers, separated from the

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<sup>1105</sup> Marsh (2005), p. 52.

<sup>1106</sup> Hough (1997), p. 154. Hough’s observation is confirmed by Gorbachev who asserts that the *obkom* and *kraikom* secretaries together with the republican first secretaries constituted one of the pillars of the whole system as they accounted for a majority in the Central Committee (Gorbachev, 1995a, p. 121).

<sup>1107</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1997), pp. 266-267.

<sup>1108</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), pp. 196-197.

state and economy and reformed along the lines of intraparty democracy with rotation of cadres, age limits, and possible cleansing of “conservative” elements. Advocating the right to private economic activity, he supplements it with the idea of democratisation of the economy based on labour councils. Even though attention is paid to economic affairs, priority is explicitly given to political reform, which is a typical feature of the liberal socialist discourse. The memorandum envisages a presidential system with a bipartisan election model and a directly elected president with a ten-year term.<sup>1109</sup> However, the proposal lacks a concrete design of the new model, which is characteristic of many Soviet reformers.

Interestingly, Iakovlev could have played a constructive role in the economic field even from the neo-Leninist perspective, which contrasts with the political realm. His push for the implementation of market mechanisms, different forms of ownership including the private one, support for cooperative movement and lease, introduction of financial and credit market along with the emphasis on the principle of distribution according to work (common for both capitalism and socialism) largely coincided with the neo-Leninist economic discourse. His excessive focus on individual, glasnost' and Western forms of democracy as well as the radically negative attitude towards Stalinism as a historic phenomenon and the Russian civilisational trajectory as such, however, thwarted the potential for constructive cooperation and mutual understanding between both discourses.<sup>1110</sup> Nonetheless, cooperation was going on at least until late 1987. In November that year, Iakovlev expressed satisfaction with the progress of perestroika, concluding that the foundations for further reforms were laid.<sup>1111</sup>

In mid-1988, the 19<sup>th</sup> All-Union Conference of the CPSU, the first of its kind since 1941, was held. Both Gorbachev and Medvedev believe that the conference marked a crucial moment of perestroika. The general secretary's speech was based on the idea of democratic socialism. At the same time, Medvedev observes that the documents passed at the conference were more progressive than the attitudes of a large majority of delegates.<sup>1112</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference, whose slogan was “More democracy, more socialism”, was convened to discuss a wide array of political, economic and social issues but in reality it focused mostly on political reform. Blaming the “conservatives” for the failures of perestroika, the conference stirred up an open political conflict. Brutents argues that the conference was a milestone on the road to chaos and the final

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<sup>1109</sup> Iakovlev (2008), pp. 28-38.

<sup>1110</sup> Iakovlev (2000), pp. 65, 68.

<sup>1111</sup> Iakovlev (2000), p. 156.

<sup>1112</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), p. 364; Medvedev (1994), pp. 71, 76-77.

failure of the entire reform process.<sup>1113</sup> The conference accelerated Gorbachev's agenda of political reform and approved the establishment of the Congress of People's Deputies which was to be elected in multicandidate elections and secret ballots. "By all appearances, then, the purpose of the Congress was to establish a pliable institution to give Gorbachev a power base independent of the Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet. (...) If the Central Committee challenged him, he could threaten to abandon the Communist Party altogether and rely on the legitimacy of his elected post."<sup>1114</sup>

Interestingly, neither Ligachev nor Ryzhkov rejected the idea of a new constitutional body but were critical of the non-transparency in its preparation under the auspices of Yakovlev. The prime minister suggested to revise the Soviet constitution first before the new Congress and Supreme Soviet were elected, but he met opposition from Gorbachev, which cast doubt upon the general secretary's sincerity in promoting the rule of law in the Soviet Union.<sup>1115</sup> Ligachev adds another interesting circumstance. During the election campaign, the Central Committee did not provide lower levels with any orders for the first time, only calling for non-interference in the ongoing process. It must have provoked controversies.<sup>1116</sup> Ryzhkov, in turn, confesses that he did not understand the entire concept of the new central constitutional body whose vague role was strengthened by the fact that the CPD was established only at the union level and in the RSFSR. The newly elected deputies tended to take executive as well as judicial powers, thus interfering in the powers of other state branches, while the position of the Council of Ministers remained weak. The prime minister points to the institutional and organisational parallels between the Congress of People's Deputies and the CPSU Central Committee, adding that both competence and needs on the part of the deputies were lacking.<sup>1117</sup>

Ryzhkov warned against populism, weakening the executive role of the government as well as the risk of loss of control over the reform process. From his point of view, the way how democratisation and glasnost' were carried out contributed to the crisis.<sup>1118</sup> Medvedev agrees with him concluding that the parliamentary election encouraged opposition and extremist actors while undermining the position of the CPSU members who turned disorientated.<sup>1119</sup> On the

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<sup>1113</sup> Brutents (2005), pp. 239-250.

<sup>1114</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 160-161.

<sup>1115</sup> Hough (1997), p. 155.

<sup>1116</sup> Ligachev (1993), p. 92.

<sup>1117</sup> Ryzhkov (2007), pp. 530-531.

<sup>1118</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), pp. 199, 275-276.

<sup>1119</sup> Medvedev (1994), p. 91.

contrary, Shakhnazarov considers the establishment of the Congress of People's Deputies and introduction of glasnost' Gorbachev's most important reform actions. Shakhnazarov, who was charged to elaborate on the draft of the new parliament along with Luk'ianov, is convinced that the emergence of the new parliamentary assembly made perestroika irreversible, for the political power started to be dispersed among different actors such as the CPSU, Congress of People's Deputies, republics and rising political opposition.<sup>1120</sup>

In addition, the institutional rearrangements included the actual paralysation of the party secretariat which was headed by Ligachev. It was done without any consent from the Central Committee.<sup>1121</sup> The posts of secretaries were preserved but their agenda changed and a large part of the staff was removed. Brutents and Kriuchkov compared the assault against the central party apparatus to Mao's Cultural Revolution and the notorious "Bombard the Headquarters" campaign whose aim was to shake the CPC in favour of spontaneous mass activity, that is, an activation of human factor.<sup>1122</sup> Sakwa believes that the gradual elimination of the party apparatus entailed a substantial institutional destabilisation and contributed to the collapse of the system in the upshot.<sup>1123</sup> A large portion of party members simply did not know what to do and how to work under the changing conditions when the CPSU was being removed from managing economic and social affairs.<sup>1124</sup> Gorbachev's offensive against the central institution of the Soviet state was accompanied by important personnel changes. Ligachev, man number two after Gorbachev, was removed from the office of secretary for ideology and organisational affairs and replaced with Vadim Medvedev as a head of the respective commission. Iakovlev was charged to supervise foreign policy on behalf of the Central Committee instead of Anatolii Dobrynin, while the KGB Chairman Viktor Chebrikov was replaced with Vladimir Kriuchkov. These steps were motivated by the efforts to weaken the "conservative opposition".

The latter was given a strong blow in connection with the famous case of Nina Andreeva's letter, published on March 13 in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, which became one of the symbols of opposition to Gorbachev's increasingly radical reform course. The history of Andreeva's letter is well-known. There are little doubts that the affair was provoked by Iakovlev and other radicals with the aim to weaken the position of "conservatives". However, "conservatives" mostly supported perestroika, only seeking to prevent it from excessive radicalism. Boldin testifies that Gorbachev was

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<sup>1120</sup> Shakhnazarov (1991), pp. 298-299, 326, 334.

<sup>1121</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 102.

<sup>1122</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 239; Kriuchkov (1997), p. 258.

<sup>1123</sup> Sakwa (2013), p. 67.

<sup>1124</sup> Nenashev (1993), pp. 116-117.

indifferent to the publication at first, but the initial stance radically changed within a few days.<sup>1125</sup> The Politburo session on the affair was dominated by Iakovlev and Medvedev who succeeded in convincing the members of the need to criticise Ligachev. Iakovlev interpreted the letter as a “manifesto of conservatism” aimed against perestroika and highlighted that attacks on perestroika had to be countered.<sup>1126</sup> Interestingly, *Sovetskaia Rossiia* was forbidden to publish responses in favour of Andreeva’s letter and other media started to “reveal” Ligachev’s alleged bribery. Gorbachev later told Ligachev that he knew that he had had nothing to do with the letter, but the general secretary never stated it in public.<sup>1127</sup> Those allegations were refused as false and fabricated by Kriuchkov as well.<sup>1128</sup>

“Conservatism” was declared the main threat to perestroika. Ligachev became an unproclaimed leader of a loyal Communist opposition at the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference. Notwithstanding the earlier rivalry and tensions between Ligachev and Ryzhkov, provoked by the former’s incessant meddling in the government’s affairs, the focus on political reform along with its shape led to a rapprochement and close cooperation between these prominent officials.<sup>1129</sup> Moreover, Ryzhkov became increasingly popular after the experience with his active steps in relation to the earthquake in Armenia in late 1988. In conjunction with his appeals to the general secretary for enforcing law and order in the country, did it have to make the supreme leader nervous.<sup>1130</sup> Cohen emphasises that Ligachev supported perestroika and reforms of the Stalinist model but opposed Gorbachev when the latter started to move away from the neo-Leninist concept of restructuring.<sup>1131</sup> Indeed, Ligachev describes the period until 1988 in positive terms: “The renewal of all aspects of life, democratisation, glasnost’—these most important signs of social progress were supplemented by swift economic stabilisation and a rapid development of the sociocultural complex. Society remained calm, stable and united.”<sup>1132</sup> From his perspective, the development of commodity-money relations (that is, market) in combination with local economic experiments, expansion of people’s initiative, emancipation of their consciousness, easing of central planning and legalisation of private labour activity were the right path. At the same time, he opposed the

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<sup>1125</sup> Boldin (2003), p. 218.

<sup>1126</sup> Iakovlev (2008), pp. 192, 199.

<sup>1127</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 302-311.

<sup>1128</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), pp. 324-325.

<sup>1129</sup> Medvedev (1994), p. 69.

<sup>1130</sup> Boldin (2003), pp. 221-222.

<sup>1131</sup> Cohen (2011), p. 84.

<sup>1132</sup> Ligachev (1993), p. 314.

restoration of private ownership, hiring of labour force, and trade with land as institutions and practices transcending the socialist framework.<sup>1133</sup>

Ligachev defined socialism in terms of public ownership of the means of production, mixed economy, democratic soviets and rule of law, socialist values (inclusive of universal human values), social justice, and welfare state.<sup>1134</sup> He warned against excessive glasnost' and argued that an excessive freedom of speech and press could damage the reform processes themselves as well as Gorbachev's own authority.<sup>1135</sup> He advocated the substantial role of media in perestroika but criticised that the media were dominated by group interests.<sup>1136</sup> Similarly, Chebrikov addressed the struggle against "bourgeois" ideologies, which resembled the campaign against "bourgeois liberalisation" in China.<sup>1137</sup> Already at a Politburo meeting in March 1987, Chebrikov concluded that glasnost' had been misused against perestroika.<sup>1138</sup> Ryzhkov eventually joined this line of reasoning and opposed the rising media attacks against both the party and state apparatuses.<sup>1139</sup> The later course of events proved them right.

Gorbachev underestimated the negative side effects of glasnost' and did not actively oppose plentiful media campaigns. Kornienko observed a systematic media campaign against the foundations of the Soviet system since 1987. It intensified after Iakovlev became responsible for the media affairs a year later. Kornienko highlights that the Politburo remained passive and did not counter anti-Soviet manifestations.<sup>1140</sup> Brutents argues that glasnost' was one-sided since the very outset for it enabled wide attacks on the CPSU, Soviet ideology and history while the opposite attitudes were not allowed. Glasnost' encouraged a positive assessment of perestroika but discredited any, however constructive criticism. Karen Nersesovich is convinced that the media soon became a tool of propaganda in the hands of radical intelligentsia and speaks about a "democratic censorship".<sup>1141</sup> The general secretary did not adhere to this point of view, actively

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<sup>1133</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 314-321.

<sup>1134</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 328-329.

<sup>1135</sup> Brown (2020), p. 256.

<sup>1136</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 393.

<sup>1137</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 24.

<sup>1138</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 150.

<sup>1139</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 406.

<sup>1140</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), pp. 152-155. The lack of action on the part of the relevant political actors and bodies led to an investigation carried out by the KGB. Kriuchkov, a chairman of the intelligence agency from 1988 to 1991, testifies that the officers investigated links between "extremist forces" and high-level party and state representatives including Aleksandr Iakovlev, Eduard Shevardnadze, Central Committee's Secretary Vadim Medvedev and Deputy General Secretary Vladimir Ivashko (Kriuchkov, 1996, p. 39).

<sup>1141</sup> Brutents (2005), pp. 297-301.

criticising negative opinions toward perestroika in the press and the responsible managers, for instance, the editor-in-chief of *Pravda* Viktor Afanas'ev.<sup>1142</sup> Gorbachev addressed the problematic side of glasnost' only in 1990, accusing media of abusing glasnost' and imposing biased views.<sup>1143</sup> His late criticism, on the contrary, was rejected by Iakovlev and Medvedev.<sup>1144</sup>

According to Grachev, the general secretary ceased to be the uniting figure not only from the perspective of the party officials as well as rank and file but also from that of the public opinion.<sup>1145</sup> Unlike the Soviet leaders, the CPC did not allow the opponents of the ruling role of the Communist Party and socialism as such to take the initiative and discredit both the fundamentals of the system and the political leadership.<sup>1146</sup> The number of defeated Communist candidates in the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies in the spring 1989 emboldened radical actors both among liberal socialists and beyond, inclusive of Boris El'tsin, who were further encouraged by growing manifestations of people's discontent and disobedience such as the strikes of miners in July that year. While Gorbachev, Iakovlev, and Shevardnadze assessed the election results positively, referring to 87 per cent of seats for the party members, Ryzhkov, Chebrikov, Ligachev, Luk'ianov, Pugo or Zaikov adopted a sceptical attitude. Soon it turned out that the prime minister was right, for many deputies started to act in breach of the party line and interests, and left the CPSU.<sup>1147</sup> Under the negative impression of the social upheavals and the subsequent authoritarian measures in China, the Soviet leader decided to maintain peace and glasnost' at any cost and mitigate the risks of social radicalisation. Hence, the fear of the price increases that ran like a red thread through the whole Gorbachev's tenure and the inclination to democratisation of the political system and activation of "human factor" which were to give direct voice to the citizens and their deputies in handling the economic affairs when Gorbachev himself was incapable of managing them.<sup>1148</sup>

In 1990, the general secretary resorted to another substantial political reform—the introduction of the presidential model. Cherniaev argues that at the beginning of 1990, Iakovlev advised

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<sup>1142</sup> Gorbachev (1995a), p. 326.

<sup>1143</sup> Much later, Gorbachev identified intelligentsia as the main beneficiary of glasnost', arguing that this social group had not been able to replace the party nomenklatura because it had lacked experience and skills. Somewhat surprisingly, the first and the last Soviet president eventually concluded that the role of intelligentsia had been negative because of the absence of positive programme and ethos (Gorbachev, 2021).

<sup>1144</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 102-104; Vorotnikov (2003), p. 390.

<sup>1145</sup> Grachev (2008), p. 169.

<sup>1146</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 236.

<sup>1147</sup> Ryzhkov (2007), pp. 532-533.

<sup>1148</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 135-139.

Gorbachev to establish a presidential system and take over extraordinary powers to carry out radical reforms including the introduction of multipartism, reduction of the party apparatus, transformation of the USSR into a union of independent republics, implementation of military reforms, dissolution of economic branch ministries, legalisation of private entrepreneurship as well as transfer of land to peasants and enterprises to workers.<sup>1149</sup> Cherniaev's assertion would indicate that prominent representatives of the liberal socialist discourse were able to understand and recognised the importance of a strong state power for the implementation of reforms irrespective of the different goals compared to the neo-Leninist actors. The Politburo members discussed the institutional revision at one of the sessions in January 1990. Indeed, Iakovlev advocated his favourite idea of a pluralist election model in contrast to Ligachev who insisted on the preservation of monopartism with the concurrent establishment of a broad national front under the leadership of the CPSU. Prime Minister Ryzhkov held a compromise position, arguing that the existence of political parties was a *fait accompli*. From his point of view, was it important to set a transparent framework, exclude right-wing parties from the political competition (Iakovlev was of the same opinion), strengthen the state bodies, and implement a presidential system.<sup>1150</sup> The last two steps were to keep the country under control and enable efficient governance after the CPSU had been deprived of executive powers.

The problem was that all ministries and other bodies were exposed to an even higher level of uncertainty than before, for they might have been dissolved at any time, which paralysed their efficiency, all the more so as being attacked by media concurrently.<sup>1151</sup> Some sources indicate that Gorbachev's election was not taken for granted. A large part of the Congress of People's Deputies favoured Nikolai Ryzhkov and Minister of Internal Affairs Vadim Bakatin to Gorbachev, and many deputies made efforts to convince them to stand as a candidate. However, both remained to be disciplined and loyal to the general secretary and refused this initiative.<sup>1152</sup> Some others tried to convince Iakovlev to run for the office, but the latter did not have such an ambition. Iakovlev testifies that Gorbachev was very relieved and excited upon his election victory, which indicates a high degree of uncertainty on the general secretary's side.<sup>1153</sup>

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<sup>1149</sup> Cherniaev (1993), pp. 330-331.

<sup>1150</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), pp. 572-573.

<sup>1151</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 223.

<sup>1152</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 148-149.

<sup>1153</sup> Iakovlev (2000), pp. 288-289.

Within the presidential vertical, the Presidential Council was established in March to replace the Politburo whose impact on the political affairs plummeted.<sup>1154</sup> The council's legal status as well as the role in the institutional design of the Soviet power structure were not clear, which was typical of many bodies of the Soviet state since the very beginning of its existence. It was a rather informal and consultative body whose sessions were held irregularly and chaotically. Boldin recalls that once some of the members started to criticise Gorbachev, the body was dissolved.<sup>1155</sup> The Presidential Council was replaced by the Security Council in line with the constitution in September. Interestingly, a majority of its members may be described as neo-Leninist. The Security Council was composed of Vadim Bakatin, Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, Vladimir Kriuchkov, Valentin Pavlov, Boris Pugo, Evgenii Primakov, Dmitrii Iazov and Gennadii Ianaev.<sup>1156</sup> Iakovlev's dissatisfaction with the new bodies culminated in his leaving from the CPSU several days before the August coup. He explained his decision by the alleged dominance of a "Stalinist gang" in the party leadership.<sup>1157</sup> Iakovlev's sentiments were shared by Cherniaev who disliked that Gorbachev was "under Boldin's influence".<sup>1158</sup>

It is worth noticing that the presidential apparatus was modelled on the Central Committee's structure with its departments. Moreover, many of their officials became members of the new administration—the head of the General Department Valerii Boldin was appointed the director of the presidential administration, while the assistant to the general secretary Nikolai Petrakov became assistant to the president.<sup>1159</sup> Ryzhkov testifies that the Presidential Council together with the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers were involved in the daily political agenda instead of the Central Committee and Politburo.<sup>1160</sup> At the same time, Ryzhkov did not understand how the president and the government would share the executive power within the presidential system given the fact that one of the principal reasons for the establishment of such a system was to provide Gorbachev with strong executive powers face to face with the power decline on the part of the office of the general secretary and the CPSU as a whole. It became evident that

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<sup>1154</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 67.

<sup>1155</sup> Boldin (2003), pp. 373-374.

<sup>1156</sup> Boldin (2003), p. 387. It led Iakovlev to the assertion that "conservatives", relying on the Politburo, parliamentary group Soiuz, Security Council, military and the KGB, succeeded in launching counteroffensive against perestroika (Iakovlev, 1994, pp. 259-260).

<sup>1157</sup> Iakovlev (2000), p. 689. Iakovlev's narrative largely coincided with El'tsin's one. According to the latter, the "administrative-command system" was reviving since 1990 (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 660).

<sup>1158</sup> Cherniaev (1993), p. 434.

<sup>1159</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 166-168.

<sup>1160</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 67.

had Gorbachev remained only a chairman of the Supreme Soviet (that is, a legislative body) and the head of a weakening political party, the actual decision-making could move to the government.<sup>1161</sup> And it was not a favourite choice for Gorbachev. That is why Falin argues that the presidential system, eliminating the power of the Politburo and the Central Committee and undermining the role of the Supreme Soviet, enabled to strengthen Gorbachev's authoritarian rule.<sup>1162</sup> Medvedev and Primakov, in turn, argue that the presidential system was not to remove the Communist Party from the political scene and decision-making because the positions of general secretary and president were to be held by a single person. Under the new circumstances, the state and Party should have been separated indeed, but the CPSU was to remain the political avant-garde and a crucial organisation for the selection and cultivation of cadres.<sup>1163</sup>

Those who stood behind the institutional redesign, nevertheless, frequently did not have clear ideas about further steps. Iakovlev's reactions during his meeting with students at the Higher Party School in Moscow in March 1990 demonstrate this fatal ignorance at the highest political levels. Speaking about the presidential system, he was not able to answer the question regarding the role of the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet in the new circumstances. Commenting on the position of the Communist Party, he admitted that he did not know how to define the role of the CPSU and its leader in the future. Similarly, he did not adopt any stance on the possible establishment of the Russian Communist Party.<sup>1164</sup> Iakovlev reiterated his allegiance to a multiparty election system, having no idea which parties could be set up. Being a supporter of a confederation, he told listeners that each republic should be given the right to choose its political system on their own.<sup>1165</sup> These statements corroborate both the absence of practical policies and the destabilising role of prominent liberal socialists.

It was more than obvious that the position of the CPSU was deteriorating and the power centre of gravity was moving away from the Party. Boldin believes that upon becoming president,

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<sup>1161</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), p. 345; Vorotnikov (2003), p. 394.

<sup>1162</sup> Falin (1999b), p. 34.

<sup>1163</sup> Medvedev (1994), p. 114; Primakov (1999), p. 66.

<sup>1164</sup> The Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (CP RSFSR) was established in June 1990 and chaired by Ivan Polozkov who belonged to the opponents of perestroika. Medvedev and other influential Soviet actors recommended Ryzhkov or other well-known union politicians to secure a cooperative relationship between the Russian Communist Party and the central union bodies but none of them was interested in such a candidature. After Polozkov was elected, it became clear that the CP RSFSR would oppose the political course of both Gorbachev and the government, which contributed to the growing destabilisation (Medvedev, 1994, pp. 142-143).

<sup>1165</sup> Iakovlev (2000), pp. 412-415.

Gorbachev concentrated enough power in his hands to push through any reforms and carry out perestroika successfully if he had asked for extraordinary powers from the Supreme Soviet, setting out for a Chinese path.<sup>1166</sup> Both historians and actors involved agree that the general secretary made the Politburo a mere consultative body, ignored standard mechanisms and breached the principle of a collective leadership.<sup>1167</sup> Gorbachev was frequently circumventing the existing bodies and made decisions on his own.<sup>1168</sup> Falin goes so far to call Gorbachev an “authoritarian leader”.<sup>1169</sup> Gorbachev’s authoritarian style of governance was, nevertheless, criticised by the members of the Central Committee at many sessions throughout 1989.<sup>1170</sup> Ligachev asserts that such a behaviour was also typical of Yakovlev, referring to several cases when the latter arbitrarily changed the wording of documents and resolutions before their submission to the Politburo.<sup>1171</sup>

Indeed, new centres of power were emerging not only in Moscow but in regions alike. The party was losing its prominent role, which was formalised in March 1990 when the Article 6 of the Constitution, promulgating the CPSU as the “leading and guiding force of the Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system”, was abolished. It opened a space for the establishment of a multiparty system. Yakovlev called upon Gorbachev to divide the Party and introduce a political competition already in 1985, but it took years before the general secretary accepted this idea. According to Brown, Gorbachev wanted to do so at the 29<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress scheduled for November 1991 which, of course, never occurred.<sup>1172</sup>

Delegates of the 28<sup>th</sup> Congress in July 1990 became witnesses of a new round of clashes between the neo-Leninist and liberal socialist wings of the Party when the former opposed the ongoing

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<sup>1166</sup> Boldin (2003), p. 354.

<sup>1167</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 260; Leonov (1995), p. 266; Nenashev (1993), p. 122. Many actors noticed this feature of Gorbachev’s work and mindset. Aleksandrov-Agentov argues that when the general secretary was preparing his conception of perestroika, he limited himself to consultations with a very narrow circle of advisors consisting of Cherniaev, Yakovlev and Medvedev (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, p. 291). Dobrynin recalls the impacts on the Soviet foreign policy where the general secretary relied on Shevardnadze to avoid the Politburo. This practice applied even to the most strategic issues such as the German question. The latter was solved by Gorbachev himself without any consent from the Politburo (Dobrynin, 1995, pp. 622-623, 631). Kriuchkov reminds of a session of the Security Council in June 1991 ahead of Gorbachev’s London trip to the G7 meeting. The general secretary did not present any draft of his speech and goals, refusing to do so. When discussing foreign policy, Kriuchkov was surprised by the lack of hard facts in Gorbachev’s argumentation (Kriuchkov, 1996, pp. 92-94).

<sup>1168</sup> In contrast, Gorbachev denied it until the very end (Gorbachev, 2021).

<sup>1169</sup> Falin (1999b), p. 17.

<sup>1170</sup> Brutents (2005), pp. 264-265.

<sup>1171</sup> Ligachev (1993), p. 105.

<sup>1172</sup> Brown (2007), p. 206.

dismantling of the CPSU's position while the latter called for the rejection of democratic centralism and class attitude, endorsement of universal human values and the introduction of a multiparty system.<sup>1173</sup> Ryzhkov observes that the Party and the Politburo alike were torn apart by the 28<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>1174</sup> The Congress passed a radical programme draft *Towards a Humane, Democratic Socialism* which demonstrated the hegemony of liberal socialist discourse in the Party. The sessions of the Central Committee after the 28<sup>th</sup> Congress were largely paralysed by an incessant rotation of members who were changing from one session to another as the republican and local party structures disintegrated.<sup>1175</sup> At the end of the year, formal factions were allowed within the CPSU, thus revoking Lenin's ban on factions imposed in 1921.<sup>1176</sup> The role of the Party in the society in the last four years of the Soviet Union, therefore, changed substantially. The same applies to the internal operation of this power structure.

#### 6.3.4 *Foreign policy and the new thinking*

Gorbachev may have built on the recent innovations in foreign policy and thinking about international relations which were advanced by Andropov. The latter preserved the class perspective on foreign policy, but its application was different. He reflected the rise of new centres of power as well as the disintegration of the ICM and pursued a larger independence of individual Communist parties and socialist countries. The general secretary allowed the possibility of different models of socialism, which opened a door to reconciliation with China. Andropov was in favour of the revision of politico-economic relations within the Soviet bloc inclusive of strengthening economic integration while abandoning the traditional policy of massive economic subsidies for allies.<sup>1177</sup> It is obvious that such a reset would have curtailed Moscow's control over other socialist countries. Andropov decided to revise the Third World policy. Instead of arbitrariness and ideology-driven aspirations, realistic long-term goals were to be defined based on a focus on the most relevant countries, economic reasonability, better coordination within the state and party apparatus in the field, the establishment of a coordination council of socialist countries in relation to the Third World and possible division of responsibilities among the socialist countries.<sup>1178</sup>

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<sup>1173</sup> Sun (1994), p. 46.

<sup>1174</sup> Ryzhkov (2007), p. 536.

<sup>1175</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 122.

<sup>1176</sup> Hough (1997), p. 172.

<sup>1177</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 384.

<sup>1178</sup> Brutents (1998), pp. 303-304.

In addition, normalisation of relations with Beijing was one of Andropov's priorities together with developing détente, disarmament, and rapprochement with capitalist countries.<sup>1179</sup> The potential of the latter was, nonetheless, undermined by a strong mistrust of the Reagan administration.<sup>1180</sup> Even though the American president sent many signals that he was interested in a direct communication with Andropov, the Soviet leader did not take them seriously due to Reagan's anti-Soviet rhetoric in public.<sup>1181</sup> On the contrary, the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) was perceived as a real threat. According to Dobrynin, the Soviet leaders concluded by mid-1983 that no deal with Reagan was possible, which was followed by the suspension of talks on the nuclear arms limitation. It marked the bottom of Moscow's relations with the Reagan administration.<sup>1182</sup>

In the early phase of his tenure, Mikhail Gorbachev largely built on the tradition of anti-imperialism. Many authors highlight that at the initial period the new general secretary's policies were free of later Westernism. *Tout au contraire*, Gorbachev perceived a focus on Europe and Asia against the background of countering the U.S. global influence and overcoming relative Soviet isolation after the intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>1183</sup> "At the outset he looked to China and India as allies in the global struggle against the United States. Gorbachev worked hard to maintain relations with longtime clients like Vietnam and North Korea in order to strengthen Soviet geopolitical standing in Asia. Gorbachev, like his predecessors, saw Asia as a Cold War theater where the Soviet Union could lead by winning the sympathies and loyalties of the regional players."<sup>1184</sup> Cherniaev admits that, instead of cooperation with Washington, Gorbachev preferred relations with Western Europe along with the tactic of provoking disagreements within the Western camp and conducting propaganda against the U.S. imperialism.<sup>1185</sup> At a meeting of the Central Committee in November 1985, the general secretary resolutely rejected pacifist policies.<sup>1186</sup> At a meeting with foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact in March 1987, Gorbachev emphasised the need to preserve the Soviet influence in Ethiopia, Angola and Africa as such. The withdrawal from Afghanistan did not belong to his priorities either and the attempt to establish a joint platform for cooperation with Beijing and New Delhi had an anti-American tint.

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<sup>1179</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 53.

<sup>1180</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 397.

<sup>1181</sup> Aleksandrov-Agentov (1994), pp. 282-283.

<sup>1182</sup> Dobrynin (1995), pp. 540, 543.

<sup>1183</sup> Kalinovsky & Radchenko (2011).

<sup>1184</sup> Radchenko (2014), p. 9.

<sup>1185</sup> Cherniaev (1993), p. 78.

<sup>1186</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 18.

The concurrent attention paid to the vision of a new economic order reflected the leader's concerns regarding the Third World and the heritage of anti-imperialist struggle. This pattern gave birth to the concept of USSR-PRC-India triangle in Asia and the "common house" in Europe. Interestingly, both were preceded by Brezhnev's idea of "common European house" made during his visit to Bonn in 1981 and his older plan for a collective security system in Asia.<sup>1187</sup> The focus on Asia-Pacific coincided with internal policies whose objective was to accelerate the development of Siberia and Soviet Far East. In 1986, a programme envisaging the investment of 200 billion rubles by 2000 was adopted.<sup>1188</sup> At a Politburo session in April that year, the general secretary stated that the Soviet Asia-Pacific strategy and involvement did not need to be anti-American necessarily but, in any case, it opposed the U.S. "bloc thinking".<sup>1189</sup> He observed that Washington was angry about warming relations between the USSR, China and India and that the American side was trying to prevent such a triangle from being established.<sup>1190</sup>

Gorbachev's Asian aspirations were vocalised especially in his speech made in Vladivostok on July 28, 1986. It addressed both the Sino-Soviet relations and the Asia-Pacific region as such. According to Cherniaev, the purpose of the visit to Vladivostok was to observe the development of perestroika in the Soviet Far East, to give a new impetus to both perestroika and relations with Asia-Pacific in line with the new thinking and send signals to the West that Moscow was prepared to be engaged in the affairs of this promising region. Not by coincidence, Secretary of State George Shultz interpreted this proclamation as another sign of Soviet expansionism.<sup>1191</sup> At the same time, the general secretary admitted the possibility of reduction of troops in the borderland, Mongolia as well as Afghanistan, supported the development of relations between Beijing and Hanoi and expressed the willingness to meet Chinese counterparts at any level.<sup>1192</sup> The Soviet leader also concluded that the priorities of both the Soviet and Chinese sides were the same, that is, acceleration of socioeconomic development.<sup>1193</sup>

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<sup>1187</sup> In May 1985, Gorbachev met India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and proposed the establishment of a collective security system in Asia which could be partially modelled on the OSCE in Europe (Gorbachev, 1987, p. 188). Speaking at a Politburo meeting in December 1986, Gorbachev emphasised the need for respecting China and added that he was in favour of the USSR-PRC-India triangle but India opposed it. The general secretary admitted that he called on New Delhi to improve relations with Beijing (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 111).

<sup>1188</sup> Dittmer (1992), pp. 84-85.

<sup>1189</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 33.

<sup>1190</sup> Gorbachev (2008e), p. 336.

<sup>1191</sup> Cherniaev (1993), pp. 91-92.

<sup>1192</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 274.

<sup>1193</sup> Gorbachev (2008d), p. 370.

Cherniaev's record in his diary from mid-July mentions Gorbachev's private discussion with Boldin, Cherniaev, Iakovlev, and Medvedev ahead of the trip to the Far East. The general secretary told his fellows that the Soviet side had to understand China and her peculiarities and recognise China's modernisation and reforms as a serious programme. From his perspective, China and her development were crucial for Moscow, hence it was important to support their efforts and respect Beijing's aspiration to become a major power. Finally, he admitted that he would be satisfied if the bilateral relations contribute to China's development.<sup>1194</sup> While the positive signals sent to Beijing found an echo quite soon, Moscow's grand vision for Asia could have been hardly acceptable for tens of local actors. Radchenko argues that no relevant country in the region was in favour of the Soviet lead. "Most regional players wanted something specific from the Soviet Union: China sought the removal of the 'three obstacles'; Japan wanted the islands; Vietnam desired developmental aid, as well as international support for its struggle for hegemony in Indochina; India, too, wanted Moscow's backing for its regional great power ambitions. Asia turned out to be too diverse and too contradictory to be instrumentalised for the purposes of Gorbachev's vision."<sup>1195</sup>

Four months after the Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev paid a visit to India to push his political vision forward. The general secretary together with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi issued the *Delhi Declaration for a Nuclear-Weapon Free and Non-Violent World* whereby the leaders claimed allegiance to peaceful coexistence and peaceful solutions of conflicts, non-violence, indivisibility of global security, the imperative of protection of human life as well as promotion of understanding between states and peoples, social and economic development and non-proliferation, setting peaceful coexistence as a universal norm of international relations.<sup>1196</sup> The document can be considered one of the first manifestations of Gorbachev's new political thinking.<sup>1197</sup> Beijing, nevertheless, remained cautious and was reluctant to embrace these new initiatives. The Chinese Communists did not support a moratorium on nuclear tests announced in August 1985, a declaration on complete elimination of nuclear arms from January 1986, or that on the prevention of arms race in space.<sup>1198</sup>

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<sup>1194</sup> Cherniaev (2008), p. 694; Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 68.

<sup>1195</sup> Radchenko (2014), pp. 305-306.

<sup>1196</sup> Gromyko (2015), pp. 203-204; *Pis'mo postoiannykh predstavitelei* (1986).

<sup>1197</sup> Savranskaya (2011), p. 26.

<sup>1198</sup> Bazhanov (2013), p. 283.

A slow progress in the grand vision for Asia was reflected by Gorbachev in his Krasnoiarsk speech made on September 16, 1988, which was meant as a continuation of the Vladivostok initiative.<sup>1199</sup> It addressed not only the Sino-Soviet bilateral issues such as the preparations for a summit but also broader politico-economic problems.<sup>1200</sup> Vámos opines that Gorbachev had drawn to the conclusion that his initiatives would not succeed if they lacked a solid economic foundations and these should have been built, *inter alia*, through the integration of the USSR to the regional economic relations in Asia-Pacific.<sup>1201</sup> By the same token, Shevardnadze acknowledges that the new leadership paid strong attention to non-Western countries including Asia in the first years. The foreign minister was very critical of the long-term confrontation with China, as a consequence of which the Soviet Union had suffered enormous economic losses.<sup>1202</sup> Normalisation of bilateral relations with the Asia-Pacific countries was one of the top foreign policy priorities.<sup>1203</sup> This process was to include a revision of assistance to Vietnam, making the country limit its external ambitions in the region to enable rapprochement between Hanoi and Beijing. In this regard, Moscow enjoyed support from Cambodia, Laos, as well as other regional actors. The Soviet side gradually ceased to back Vietnam's actions in Cambodia, which helped to improve relations with China.<sup>1204</sup>

At a closed meeting of the leaders of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in Moscow in November 1986, Gorbachev presented new principles of Soviet foreign policy to the allies. The relations among the socialist countries would be based on non-interference in internal affairs, no protection and military support from Moscow, accountability of the Communist parties to the citizens, and market conditions as far as mutual economic exchanges were concerned. Grachev calls this programme "Gorbachev Doctrine", making an allusion to the Brezhnev Doctrine with its concept of limited sovereignty and considering this moment the end of the Soviet empire.<sup>1205</sup> The real picture is, nevertheless, more complex. Ouimet explains that the Brezhnev Doctrine and the obligations emerging from socialist internationalism were abandoned already in the early 1980s in connection with the Polish crisis and the need for a revision of economic relations along the

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<sup>1199</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 417.

<sup>1200</sup> In the speech, the general secretary announced that Moscow would not deploy any additional nuclear weapons in the Asian part of the country, calling for cuts in conventional troops in Asia-Pacific and making the Indian Ocean a nuclear-free zone (Gorbachev, 2009e, p. 68).

<sup>1201</sup> Vámos (2011), pp. 92-93.

<sup>1202</sup> Shevardnadze (2009), p. 115.

<sup>1203</sup> Only in 1988 Shevardnadze visited Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, North Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam (Shevardnadze, 2009, pp. 125, 133).

<sup>1204</sup> Shevardnadze (2009), pp. 124-125, 129-130.

<sup>1205</sup> Grachev (2008), pp. 118-120.

line of marketisation was accentuated by Andropov several years prior to the 1986 Moscow summit.<sup>1206</sup> Leonov agrees that the Polish crisis demonstrated the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine and the incapacity for any other military interventions.<sup>1207</sup> At the same time, Gorbachev did not refrain from influencing foreign Communist parties, for he was interested in weakening the “conservative” actors.<sup>1208</sup>

The new political thinking was officially instituted by the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress. The delegates were acquainted with a new interpretation of foreign policy and international affairs. The new political thinking adopted a global stance highlighting the growing interdependence, the imperative of mutual security as well as the compatibility of different socioeconomic systems. Strategic military parity was replaced by military sufficiency and the substitution of the concept of national liberation movements for neutral regional conflicts implied a reassessment of the anti-imperialist political agenda.<sup>1209</sup> The concept of military sufficiency was elaborated under and approved by Brezhnev and later followed by Andropov with the aim to cover the necessary military expenditures only while negotiating about a proportionate disarmament with the West.<sup>1210</sup> Indeed, Brezhnev stated during his speech in Tula in January 1977 that the Soviet side did not seek military superiority but aims at military sufficiency to prevent any aggression against the country. Dobrynin argues that it was the first official use of the concept.<sup>1211</sup> The concept of military sufficiency was an integral part of a new military doctrine and disarmament initiatives. The latter included the idea of elimination of nuclear weapons. It emerged in the General Staff already in

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<sup>1206</sup> Ouimet (2003), p. 202.

<sup>1207</sup> Leonov (1995), p. 176.

<sup>1208</sup> Brutents recalls that during the meetings with Gustáv Husák and János Kádár on the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution in 1987, when the heads of all socialist countries met in Moscow for the last time, Gorbachev pressed the two leaders to step down while speaking about non-interference at the event (Brutents, 2005, pp. 470, 478). Gorbachev repeatedly contradicted himself in this regard. He accentuated non-interference and freedom of choice for others while admitting that Moscow did support proreform forces in socialist countries. On other occasions, he denied any meddling into other countries' affairs (Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002, p. 88).

<sup>1209</sup> Brown (2020), p. 164.

<sup>1210</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 341.

<sup>1211</sup> Dobrynin (1995), pp. 379-380. At the same time, Brezhnev presented his perspective on détente. From his point of view, détente was a transition towards equal relations between states, readiness to resolve conflicts by peaceful means and ability to take legitimate interests of others into account. The Tula speech was welcomed by President Jimmy Carter who decided to write to his counterpart that he wanted to eliminate nuclear arms completely, calling for the joint prevention of crises in individual regions and talks on reduction of conventional forces in Europe. Dobrynin admits that the Soviet side was not prepared for such radical steps yet, thus considering Carter's proposals to be a tactical move only. Be it as it may, these plans were soon put aside by the Americans themselves (Dobrynin, 1995, pp. 380-385, 390). In May 1978, NATO set the goal of military superiority over the Warsaw Pact in the European subcontinent (Dobrynin, 1995, p. 429).

1983 thanks to Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, who served as a chief of the General Staff in 1984–1988, and Georgii Kornienko, the first deputy foreign minister between 1977 and 1986.<sup>1212</sup> Kornienko describes that he presented Akhromeev’s plan to Shevardnadze in 1985 and the latter subsequently submitted it to Gorbachev who liked it to such extent that it resulted in the general secretary’s statement on nuclear disarmament in January 1986.<sup>1213</sup>

In that year, the draft of the new military doctrine was prepared under Akhromeev’s supervision. Unlike the past, when the primary strategic goal was to prevent a large-scale war and maintain sufficient military capabilities within the Warsaw Pact for an offensive against the Western countries in the case of aggression against the Soviet bloc, the revised doctrine was based on the following pillars: (1) the possibility of reduction of military tensions despite the U.S. and NATO still remaining enemies; (2) the long-term goal of elimination of nuclear arsenals and cooperation with the U.S. and NATO in this field; (3) possibility of military cuts including the unilateral ones; (4) abandonment of counteroffensive upon an aggression against the USSR; (5) political and diplomatic actions aimed at the prevention of war.<sup>1214</sup> These points show the move in the Soviet military thinking under perestroika. At a closed meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in May 1986, Gorbachev claimed allegiance to military sufficiency and called world war “an absolute evil”. Speaking about the need for revision of relations with both socialist and capitalist countries (inclusive of a new perspective on China), the general secretary reiterated the priority of peace over class interests.<sup>1215</sup>

Aside from the moderate anti-imperialist paradigm accompanied by an omnidirectional orientation of the external model, Gorbachev was exposed to Westernist influences. Historians mostly agree that Gorbachev’s thinking of foreign policy was influenced by his experience with Western countries and political leaders as well as the close relationship with Iakovlev, Arbatov, Cherniaev, Shakhnazarov, Ivan Frolov and other representatives of Soviet intelligentsia.<sup>1216</sup> An overwhelming majority of his foreign trips went to the West whereas other regions remained

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<sup>1212</sup> Falin (1999a), p. 427.

<sup>1213</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), pp. 86-90.

<sup>1214</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), pp. 123-125.

<sup>1215</sup> Brutents (2005), p. 130.

<sup>1216</sup> Hough (1997), p. 500. Arbatov also mentions the intellectual influence by Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell and Olof Palme (Cohen, 1989, p. 315). It is in full agreement with Gorbachev’s later testimony which adds further authors whose works he got acquainted with in the 1970s, having a privilege to read foreign literature on politics and political science. Those authors include Giuseppe Boffa, Willy Brandt, Roger Garaudy, Antonio Gramsci, François Mitterrand and Palmiro Togliatti (Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002, pp. 49-50). But Gorbachev highlights that the USSR under his leadership was the first country in history to make the new thinking a state policy (Gorbachev, 2021).

aside, albeit they provided many examples of successful modernisation and development such as Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea or Taiwan. Instead, Gorbachev visited Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and West Germany in the 1970s and Britain, Canada and Italy in 1983–1984, becoming familiar with liberal democracies only. Talking to Margaret Thatcher, Gorbachev mentioned the need for ending the Cold War, which was followed by his speech in British Parliament where he expressed the conviction that the nuclear age required a “new political thinking”.<sup>1217</sup> Cherniaev recalls that Thatcher’s visit to Moscow in spring 1987 deepened the general secretary’s inclination to the West, which is confirmed by Ryzhkov.<sup>1218</sup> The growing interest in this vector was reaffirmed by the establishment of the Institute of Europe at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in the same year.<sup>1219</sup> It was quite natural that such interactions were awaking reflections on the political reforms and interest in the institutional design of the developed liberal democracies.

The revision of the Soviet foreign policy was consensual among the leadership and did not provoke substantial friction until 1988. However, with the rise of Westernism, new forms of universalism and abandonment of a class perspective undermined the consensus between neo-Leninism and liberal socialism. The minister of foreign affairs started to argue that peaceful coexistence did not eliminate the roots of confrontation. At a closed meeting at the Foreign Ministry in July 1988, the head of Soviet diplomacy declared that the conflict between the capitalist and socialist blocs was not a defining feature of international relations and refused the class struggle as a foundation of this competition. From his perspective, the interpretation of the peaceful coexistence qua class struggle was erroneous.<sup>1220</sup> By the early 1990s, Shevardnadze concluded that the very concept was outmoded.<sup>1221</sup> It was the very problem of class attitude which eventually resulted in a conflict within the leadership. Ligachev insisted on the relevance of the class perspective in foreign policy, advocating the model of peaceful coexistence as a pragmatic form of class struggle. Ligachev’s neo-Leninist vision of foreign policy increasingly differed from the line promoted by the general secretary which culminated in the speech delivered at the UN General Assembly in December 1988 and at the Council of Europe in

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<sup>1217</sup> Shevardnadze called the new thinking a “global revolution of the mind” while perestroika was a “peaceful revolution” (Shevardnadze, 1991, pp. 46, 185).

<sup>1218</sup> Ryzhkov (2007), p. 24.

<sup>1219</sup> Brown (2020), p. 200.

<sup>1220</sup> Bovin (2003), p. 434. On that occasion, participants concluded that the Soviet leadership had made several serious mistakes—conflict with China, arms race, deployment of SS-20s in Europe, intervention in Afghanistan, incorrect interpretation of European integration process as well as preference to class attitude in international relations (Shevardnadze, 2009, p. 112).

<sup>1221</sup> Shevardnadze (1991), pp. 48, 61.

Strasbourg in July 1989. Being drafted particularly by Cherniaev, the UN speech focused on the freedom of choice for nations to choose their way of life, giving up the use of force and unilateral military cuts and arms reductions.<sup>1222</sup> The Strasbourg speech, in turn, addressed the idea of pan-Europeanism and a “common European house”, reviving Charles de Gaulle’s vision of Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals in a sense.

The general secretary started to use the concept in 1984. He explained it in greater detail during his visit to Czechoslovakia in April 1987 when arguing that the common house includes several “entrances” with different social systems and military-political blocs. He recognised the existence of military organisations as a matter of fact, insisting, however, on the need for mutual communication and their gradual transformation.<sup>1223</sup> These proclamations competed with George Bush’s concept of “Europe whole and free” and a “new Atlanticism for a new era” which envisaged both a united Europe and the possibility of a new common security space from Vancouver to Vladivostok.<sup>1224</sup> Shevardnadze interpreted these steps as a sequel to the Helsinki process aimed at gradual construction of the single European space with a possible overhang to Asia and the North America. According to the Soviet foreign minister, Moscow was interested in the single economic and legal area encompassing both the USSR and Europe: “We ourselves envisioned the creation of permanent institutions for the pan-European process and new structures of security for the continent.”<sup>1225</sup>

The country’s integration into the world economy was discussed by Gorbachev and the Trilateral Commission on the margins of the UN General Assembly in 1988. The meeting was followed by a visit paid by David Rockefeller, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Yasuhiro Nakasone, and Henry Kissinger to Moscow a month later. In addition, the Soviet general secretary was interested in establishing relations with G7, which soon occurred thanks to François Mitterrand. The interactions with G7 culminated in a meeting in London in July 1991.<sup>1226</sup> The negotiations covered not only the issues related to economic integration but also those of the conclusion of the Cold War. The Soviet and American leaders agreed that there were no winners and no losers after the end of the Cold War and that the European continent was to be united and based on “democratic values”.<sup>1227</sup>

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<sup>1222</sup> Grachev (2008), pp. 163-166.

<sup>1223</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), pp. 71-74.

<sup>1224</sup> Baker (1989); Bush (1989).

<sup>1225</sup> Shevardnadze (1991), p. 130.

<sup>1226</sup> Gorbachev (1995b), p. 285.

<sup>1227</sup> Brown (2020), p. 285; Grachev (2008), pp. 228-229.

However, all these commitments and visions would be trampled in the following years and decades.

Foreign policy agenda started to be dominated by Gorbachev's endeavour to reach rapprochement with the Western countries in general and the U.S. in particular. The anti-American as well as anti-imperialist narratives virtually disappeared from the general secretary discourse's in 1988.<sup>1228</sup> The general secretary handled foreign policy in a more efficient and successful way compared to the economic issues and tangible results came soon. His ideas and actions brought him an unprecedented popularity in the West, whereas he was losing support and legitimacy at home. Finally, Kalinovsky and Radchenko conclude that there were two Gorbachevs—before and after 1988.<sup>1229</sup> Such an observation coincides with my thesis that the general secretary adopted the liberal socialist discourse to the detriment of the neo-Leninist one at that time. Iakovlev believes that Gorbachev's foreign policy was successful, bringing positive results for the entire international community. Iakovlev's retrospective assessment of the late Soviet foreign policy includes a positive perspective on the normalisation of relations with China and Deng's reforms as well as a negative view on attempts to usurp a "victory" in the Cold War for the West. *Tout au contraire*, Gorbachev's aide holds a stance that the end of the bloc confrontation was, first of all, perestroika's merit.<sup>1230</sup> A negative attitude towards the widespread interpretation of the end of the Cold War as a victory of the West was conveyed by Gorbachev himself in his last article.<sup>1231</sup> Cherniaev argues that Gorbachev's partnership with Washington gave an impetus to the transition to a new world order and the gradual integration of Soviet Union into the world economy and global structures. This positive dynamic was, however, thwarted by the August coup.<sup>1232</sup>

Neo-Leninist actors held a different point of view. The initial positive moves including the global shift to peaceful coexistence, military sufficiency, and de-ideologisation of foreign policy were gradually overshadowed by a new universalist thinking and ideology, which led to giving up the protection of Soviet national interests. Kornienko identifies a threefold cause of the final failure: (1) substitution of the concept of peaceful coexistence as approved by the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress with the idea of partnership and non-existence of any rivalry and conflicts of interests; (2) overemphasis on panhuman values and individual rights and freedoms in conjunction with

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<sup>1228</sup> Savranskaya (2011), p. 30.

<sup>1229</sup> Kalinovsky & Radchenko (2011).

<sup>1230</sup> Iakovlev (2000), pp. 526, 529-530.

<sup>1231</sup> Gorbachev (2021).

<sup>1232</sup> Cherniaev (1993), pp. 465-470.

ignoring other interests and values; (3) identification of the panhuman values and the principles of new thinking with the Western world.<sup>1233</sup> The failure of the general secretary's policy towards the capitalist countries is admitted even by Dobrynin: "In exchange for the generous Soviet concessions Gorbachev and his devoted lieutenant Shevardnadze offered the West, they could and should have obtained a more important role for the Soviet Union in European security and a stronger Soviet voice in European affairs. But they did not. Able but inexperienced, impatient to reach agreement, but excessively self-assured and flattered by the Western media, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were often outwitted and outplayed by their Western partners."<sup>1234</sup> Brutents concluded that the years 1989–1991 had marked the withdrawal of the USSR from strong international positions as a result of the absence of a thought-out foreign policy strategy and realism.<sup>1235</sup>

## 6.4 Crisis and catastrophe

The aforementioned period was affected by a malign combination of nationalism, economic crisis, and harsh political struggles including but not limited to institutional disbalance and weakness on the part of the government actors.

### 6.4.1 *Struggle for perestroika*

The large-scale democratisation, the elimination of the circular flow of power in the CPSU, competitive elections to new representative bodies, and glasnost' together with the intention to reform the Union led to the rise of nationalism. The general secretary opened the nationality question in 1988 and it was soon followed by conflicts. The revision of the Union Treaty was not on the agenda since the beginning. Hough argues that Gorbachev started to consider it at the end of 1989.<sup>1236</sup> In contrast to frequent assertions that the USSR collapsed as a result of the people's revolution and the fight of the oppressed nations against Moscow's empire, Burlatskii, Cohen, Hough, Sakwa, Shliapentokh and other authors of different ideological orientation argue that no revolution occurred and that the decisive blow to the centre was delivered by El'tsin's Russia, not by the regions.<sup>1237</sup>

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<sup>1233</sup> Akhromeev & Kornienko (1992), pp. 255, 309.

<sup>1234</sup> Dobrynin (1995), pp. 627-628.

<sup>1235</sup> Brutents (2005), pp. 417-422.

<sup>1236</sup> Hough (1997), p. 378.

<sup>1237</sup> Burlatskii (1996); Cohen (2011); Hough (1997); Sakwa (2013); Shlapentokh (2001).

Even though the support for democratisation and economic liberalisation together with the dissatisfaction over corruption, economic shortages, party officials, or the ruling role of the Party was growing at the turn of the decade, sociological surveys indicated that an overwhelming majority of people opposed capitalism and free market while appreciating the achievements of the Soviet system such as state ownership of large enterprises, guaranteed employment, regulated consumer prices and free education and health care. Similarly positive were the attitudes towards the Soviet Union itself. A referendum that was held in 9 out of 15 republics in March 1991, included 93 per cent of the population and became the only national referendum in the Soviet history, showed that 76.4 per cent of citizens voted in favour of preserving the Union with a turnout of more than 80 per cent.<sup>1238</sup>

Separatist tendencies were driven mostly by local elites rather than the population, which was facilitated by the democratisation of the Communist parties, for it created favourable conditions for populist and radical candidates. Despite that, the rise of nationalism in individual parts of the Union did not lead to the demands of secession and independence except for the Baltic republics and Transcaucasia.<sup>1239</sup> One can, therefore, conclude that the decisive role in dismantling the Soviet Union was paradoxically played by its centre, that is, Russia.<sup>1240</sup> The risk of nationalism and separatism was played down by influential actors such as Iakovlev. To put an example, upon his return from Lithuania in 1988, he claimed that “nothing special” was going on there in contrast to Kriuchkov who warned Gorbachev against the nationalist drive.<sup>1241</sup> Kriuchkov asserts that Iakovlev contributed to and sympathised with nationalist movements in Soviet republics, especially in the Baltic region and Central Asia, since he perceived the USSR as an empire which was to be eliminated.<sup>1242</sup>

The dynamic of relations between the Union and the RSFSR was strongly affected by the rivalry between Gorbachev and El'tsin. The origin of the quarrel dates back to 1987 when Gorbachev contributed to his removal from the office of Moscow's first secretary. By that time, El'tsin presented himself as a critic of the Gorbachevian-style perestroika. He lambasted Ligachev's anti-alcohol campaign because it led to a substantial decrease in revenues, the expansion of a black market, and a high number of poisonings.<sup>1243</sup> Interestingly, he was sometimes more

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<sup>1238</sup> Cohen (2011), pp. 90-91.

<sup>1239</sup> Cohen (2011), p. 122.

<sup>1240</sup> Ryzhkov (2007), p. 512.

<sup>1241</sup> Ligachev (1993), pp. 137-138.

<sup>1242</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), p. 288.

<sup>1243</sup> El'tsin (1990), p. 96.

“orthodox” than Gorbachev himself. Discussing a draft of the general secretary’s report on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution at the Politburo in October 1987, El'tsin criticised an excessive accent put on the February Revolution to the detriment of the October one and suggested that a stronger emphasis should have been put on the role of Lenin and his fellows such as Felix Dzerzhinskii.<sup>1244</sup> Concurrently, the future Russian leader addressed the slow progress of reforms at lower levels and the lack of a clear and coherent vision on the part of the general secretary and focused on criticism of privileges in Soviet society.

When speaking at the 1st Congress of People’s Deputies, he praised economic democracy and declared that the principle of election of managers should be expanded to all social organisations, not limiting itself to enterprises.<sup>1245</sup> In a CC Plenum held in May 1989, El'tsin interpreted the reform process through the prism of “antagonism of interests” between the “ruling elites” and people, speaking strongly against privileges and for the transfer of all power to soviets, annual party congresses and conferences as well as genuine democratisation and glasnost'. At the same time, he argued that liberalisation was leading to instability, disorder, crime, and social injustice.<sup>1246</sup> The populist motive of a gap between elites and people belonged to a commonplace in El'tsin’s rhetoric. By that time, he asserted that the main problem of the Communist Party was that workers had lost their leading position and the Party had turned into an instrument of “partocracy” as Soviet bureaucracy became a class.<sup>1247</sup> In a book published in 1990, El'tsin attacked the leading figures of the Soviet state and named only two capable politicians among the Politburo members and candidates, that is, Aleksandr Iakovlev and Vladimir Dolgikh who should have become a head of the government under Grishin, which, however, failed after the latter’s removal.<sup>1248</sup>

Interestingly, some Gorbachev’s aides had different ideas about El'tsin’s possible role in the big politics. Listening to the latter’s speech at the 27<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress, Shakhnazarov concluded that Boris Nikolaevich should cooperate with the general secretary, being used as a radical element which would draw the moderate Gorbachev forward and, at the same time, help the leader to

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<sup>1244</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 249.

<sup>1245</sup> *Tekst k vystupleniiu na I s"ezde narodnykh deputatov* (1989).

<sup>1246</sup> *Tekst vystupleniia chlena TsK KPSS B. N. El'tsina* (1989).

<sup>1247</sup> *Tezisy vystupleniia na zasedanii Mezhhregional'noi gruppe narodnykh deputatov* (1989). El'tsin’s narratives went beyond the official criticism of bureaucratism which was an integral part of hegemonic discourses in the Soviet Union. The interpretation of bureaucracy as a ruling class had affinities with dissenting perspectives on socialism of the Soviet type as represented by Lev Trotskii, Milovan Djilas and Mikhail Voslenskii. See Djilas (1957), Voslensky (1984) and Trotsky (1937).

<sup>1248</sup> El'tsin (1990), p. 109.

present himself as a centrist actor open to dialogue and compromise.<sup>1249</sup> However, it turned out soon that El'tsin wanted to play a game on his own. When El'tsin wrote his book, he was a political outsider with large ambitions, embracing different political interests than before his temporary fall in 1987. The unappreciated politician called for a “civilised” life for the Soviet people, emphasised the primary role of political reform to the detriment of economic restructuring, admitted the introduction of a multiparty electoral system and praised social radicalism.<sup>1250</sup> He accentuated civil and political rights, separation of powers, federalism and sovereignty of republics, transparency and free access to unclassified information, elimination of state control over media, freedom of press, reduction of legislative initiative to the Council of Ministers and people’s deputies, that is, a parliamentary democracy. His economic programme concentrated on the implementation of a free market, progressive tax system, subsistence wage, reduction of state control over enterprises, overall deregulation and transfer of social property to local soviets, republics, and labour collectives.<sup>1251</sup> The top priority was, nevertheless, identified with “Russian national revival” based on the primacy of human rights and economic freedom.<sup>1252</sup> However, the increasing populist features could have been hardly overlooked. In late 1990, Boldin and Ryzhkov conveyed to Gorbachev that no cooperation with El'tsin was possible, for the latter wanted to assume as much power as possible and destroy the Soviet Union.<sup>1253</sup>

Amid the deteriorating macroeconomic situation and the rise in nationalism in 1989, the neo-Leninist actors succeeded in consolidating their position in the Council of Ministers. Ryzhkov’s new cabinet appointed in July included economist Abalkin as the deputy premier and Pavlov as the minister of finance.<sup>1254</sup> Only tenth of the former ministers kept their positions in the new government. Abalkin reminds that the new members were younger and the economic ministers were very qualified and competent, which created favourable conditions for the implementation of successful economic policies.<sup>1255</sup> Even though Ryzhkov found a strong ally in Leonid Abalkin and Valentin Pavlov who served as a chairman of the State Committee of Prices between 1986

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<sup>1249</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), p. 364.

<sup>1250</sup> El'tsin (1990), pp. 123-125, 174-175.

<sup>1251</sup> Materialy koordinatsionnogo soveta (1989).

<sup>1252</sup> El'tsin (1989).

<sup>1253</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 647.

<sup>1254</sup> Abalkin was a director of the Institute of Economics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1986–1989. With regards to economic perestroika, the institute proposed cuts in budget deficit and stabilisation of money circulation and consumer market. The main problem was seen in poor implementation of economic reform. The institute’s experts were, nonetheless, convinced that the existing problems could be handled (Abalkin, 1991, pp. 6, 15).

<sup>1255</sup> Abalkin (1991), pp. 26-27.

and 1989 and would replace Ryzhkov as the head of the Cabinet of Ministers in 1991, the essential problem was institutional weakness of the government in the Soviet political system since the emergence of the Soviet state until its collapse. Ryzhkov repeatedly criticised the lack of government's powers in the economic field and permanent interference from the Central Committee and its apparatus whose role in economic decision-making was increasing in the course of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>1256</sup> Not by coincidence, this problem would be addressed by Pavlov in the same way later, contributing to the premier's involvement in the August coup.<sup>1257</sup>

Overall, the role of the government in the Soviet political system was limited and its efficiency was undermined by the size of this body. It was neither a real decision-making body nor a platform for genuine discussion. Interestingly, there was no voting whatsoever.<sup>1258</sup> Ryzhkov's cabinet consisted of more than 100 ministers and 15 premiers of individual republics. Their control over the respective branches were, however, of rather formal character and their responsibility was vague. Even though there was the presidium as an executive body of the Council of Ministers, compound of the prime minister, his deputies, minister of finance and minister of foreign affairs, some ministers were completely exempted from the head of the government's control, that is, minister of defence, internal affairs, foreign affairs and KGB. The prime minister was informed about these crucial areas only at the Politburo sessions and was authorised to discuss relevant issues only within this body. In addition, the prime minister was not allowed to dismiss any of his ministers or deputies without consent from the Politburo. In the case of a conflict between ministries (state bodies) and party bodies, the binding decision was mostly made by the latter.<sup>1259</sup> The establishment of the presidential system in 1990 did not change the inferior position of the

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<sup>1256</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 83; Vorotnikov (2003), p. 105. At a Politburo meeting in June 1988, Ryzhkov argued that a new framework for the role of the government, inclusive of its accountability to the Parliament and the right to legislative initiative, was needed (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 391). The same happened again and again until late 1990. At a meeting with the heads of republican supreme soviets in October 1990, the prime minister reiterated that a strong executive power was missing and all parties concerned should have decided whether the country was to be administered by a strong president or a strong government. Interestingly, Ryzhkov called on Gorbachev to assume stronger powers at that moment. The same appeal for a strong central authority was vocalised at the Presidential Council (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, pp. 644, 647; Gorbachev, 2012, pp. 507-508).

<sup>1257</sup> Similar tensions existed between Brezhnev and Kosygin. The former was not very supportive of the prime minister's reform aspirations and efforts to find ways to cooperate with China (Aleksandrov-Agentov, 1994, p. 258). Bovin describes the relations between both men as bad and gives examples. When Brezhnev asked the Supreme Soviet to dismiss Kosygin and appoint Tikhonov as a new prime minister, he did not say any single positive word about Kosygin. And when Kosygin died in December 1980, this news was published only two days later in order not to spoil Brezhnev's birthday celebrations (Bovin, 2003, pp. 380-383).

<sup>1258</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 231.

<sup>1259</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), pp. 103-105.

government. The transformation of the Council of Ministers into the Cabinet of Ministers in 1991 only accentuated the government's dependence on the president.

Gorbachev's hesitancy in economic issues, inability to follow a consistent economic policy, and obvious lack of economic expertise had serious financial consequences. The state debt was soaring. The worsening economic condition manifested itself in the deterioration of international credit ratings. Until 1989, Moscow was provided with credits with an interest rate similar to that of Belgium, Portugal, or Canada. Since then, however, the situation was rapidly worsening. Foreign banks were sceptical and required additional guarantees from their governments or collateral.<sup>1260</sup> The Soviet Union lost access to external financing, which made Gorbachev to print money. The fiscal expansionism, in turn, further pushed inflation up and deepened the state deficit. An increasing amount of money, at the same time, went to rising wages instead of investment, and the households' savings and incomes were rising disproportionately to both labour productivity and supply, which aggravated the problems with shortages of goods even more so that Gorbachev impeded the price reform.<sup>1261</sup> The following table shows the deterioration of macroeconomic indicators between 1987 and 1990:<sup>1262</sup>

	1987	1988	1989	1990
<b>Deficit of the state budget to GDP (in %)</b>	7.3	9.2	8.5	4.1
<b>Internal debt to GDP (in %)</b>	26.6	35.6	43.1	56.6
<b>Money issuance (in billions of rubles)</b>	5.8	11.0	17.9	26.6
<b>Year-on-year retail price index (in %)</b>	7.3	8.4	10.5	18.6

Budget deficits weakened the government's ability to enforce reform policies and the decline in economic performance entailed a decrease in tax revenues. The share of the turnover tax, which was the main source of tax revenue over a long period, on GDP dropped by 20 per cent in the last years of perestroika. Similarly, the share of enterprise tax on GDP fell from 16.2 per cent in 1986 to 11.7 per cent in 1991. The debilitation of the central bodies and the disintegration of united fiscal and central policies were accompanied by an increasing resistance from lower levels, regional and local governments, which retained tax revenues instead of transferring them to

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<sup>1260</sup> Miller (2016), p. 151.

<sup>1261</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 210.

<sup>1262</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 258.

Moscow in conformity with the law.<sup>1263</sup> Such a loss of authority and actorness on the part of the central administration and consequent anarchy never happened in China.

At the same time, Ryzhkov's new cabinet appointed in July 1990 was competent enough to counter the crisis.<sup>1264</sup> Abalkin became a head of the newly formed State Commission on Economic Reform whose task was to prepare a programme of the transition to a market economy.<sup>1265</sup> The commission consisted of several dozens of experts who enjoyed the privilege to travel abroad to gain due experience. The body included such economists as Aganbegian, Iasin, Iavlinskii, and Shatalin. According to its chairman, the problem lied in the lack of power and weak coordination with other economic bodies starting from the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) and State Supplies of the USSR (Gossnab) and ending with the Ministry of Finance. Despite that, it managed to be the brain centre for all relevant normative acts in the field at that time.<sup>1266</sup> The commission prepared a draft of economic reform within several months. The material was presented at All-Union Scientific and Practical Conference in mid-November 1989 with the participation of state and party officials, inclusive of the general secretary, prime minister, Politburo members, Central Committee's secretaries, ministers, prominent academicians, entrepreneurs and public figures.<sup>1267</sup> The delegates supported the government concept of the radical economic reform.<sup>1268</sup>

Sutela assesses the strategy in very positive terms: "The Soviet government had never before such a detailed and coherent blueprint for economic reform. It offered both a short-term programme of economic stabilisation, a description of the economic model set as a goal, and an evaluation of alternative paths to the goal. For the first time in the USSR, the Abalkin programme set denationalisation of state property through *arenda* and the selling off of enterprises to workers and collectives as a goal. It was also clearly committed to a transition to a market economy, including the introduction of markets for labour, capital, and foreign exchange. This transition would be cushioned by a system of social guarantees. A centrally managed sector should remain

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<sup>1263</sup> Miller (2016), p. 158.

<sup>1264</sup> Abalkin was a director of the Institute of Economics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1986–1989. With regards to economic perestroika, the institute proposed cuts in budget deficit and stabilisation of money circulation and consumer market. The main problem was seen in poor implementation of economic reform. The institute's experts were, nonetheless, convinced that the existing problems could be handled (Abalkin, 1991, pp. 6, 15).

<sup>1265</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), p. 228.

<sup>1266</sup> Abalkin (1991), pp. 54-64.

<sup>1267</sup> Abalkin & Miliukov (1990).

<sup>1268</sup> Alekseev (2020), pp. 49-51.

for raw materials, fuels, and defence plants, but the bulk of the economy would operate through a market only regulated by the state.”<sup>1269</sup> Evgenii Iasin, who took part in the elaboration of Abalkin’s programme, highlights the idea of a plurality of forms of ownership and the recognition of the legitimacy of different forms of income besides labour income which was considered the only acceptable income in the Stalinist economy. Market was conceptualised as the chief economic mechanism for the first time, which entailed the recognition of a conflict between economic efficiency and social justice, between profitability and welfare state.<sup>1270</sup>

At the same time, the strategy envisaged a gradual transformation without leaps and shock therapies, remaining moderate in some important regards such as the privatisation of state assets or rejection of planning, and finally put emphasis on restrictive fiscal and monetary policies in order to mitigate currency in circulation, indebtedness and inflation.<sup>1271</sup> The government’s objective was to create a pluralist economic environment maintaining certain role of central planning and goszakazy and preventing a considerable rise of private ownership or monopolies. By the mid-1990s, the ownership structure was to be as follows: 30 per cent of property under state control, 30 per cent leased property, 25 per cent stock companies, and 15 per cent cooperatives. The share of state orders should have been reduced from 50 per cent in 1990 to 30 per cent in 1995.<sup>1272</sup>

Even though minor changes were made in Abalkin’s plan and despite certain divergencies among ministers, Ryzhkov and the Council of Ministers embraced it, being supported by the Supreme Soviet, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of People’s Deputies as well as the Central Committee initially. Therefore, the government passed a resolution on the preparation of the transition to a regulated market economy in May 1990.<sup>1273</sup> Abalkin insisted that the reform had to be carried out by a strong, authoritarian state power based on a wide social consensus and support all the more so that the transformation would entail negative side effects such as inflation and unemployment and require restrictions including the ban on strikes and suspension of democracy in enterprises.<sup>1274</sup> The government even proposed a referendum on its reform plan to generate sufficient social support but this proposal was rejected by the Supreme Soviet.<sup>1275</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>1269</sup> Sutela (1991), pp. 164-165.

<sup>1270</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1998), p. 229.

<sup>1271</sup> Nolan (1995), p. 250.

<sup>1272</sup> Abalkin (1991), pp. 75-76; Khanin (2010), p. 312.

<sup>1273</sup> Alekseev (2020), p. 52.

<sup>1274</sup> Abalkin (1991), pp. 111-113.

<sup>1275</sup> Abalkin (1991), p. 159.

the strategy did not enjoy (sufficient) support from Gorbachev, the RSFSR headed by El'tsin and the Inter-Regional Group of Deputies which formed in the Congress of People's Deputies as the first legal parliamentary opposition in 1989.<sup>1276</sup> The general secretary attacked the cabinet's actions at the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Supreme Soviet in May and the body subsequently blocked Ryzhkov's plan to increase prices by mid-1990.<sup>1277</sup>

Both Russian representatives and the opposition in the CPD were in favour of the so-called 500 Days Programme authored by Stanislav Shatalin, Grigorii Iavlinskii, and other radical economists. This plan proposed a shock therapy scenario, that is, an accelerated transition to the market including privatisation. At the same time, it addressed social issues and its proponents publicly opposed the negative economic and social side effects of Abalkin's strategy, rejecting any deterioration of living standards. But Shatalin's plan also posed a threat to the existence of the Soviet Union. Ryzhkov recalls that when asking Shatalin, Iavlinskii, and Gorbachev whether the plan preserved the USSR as a state entity, he was given no clear answer.<sup>1278</sup> Abalkin adds that Shatalin's group had only an economic union of independent states in mind.<sup>1279</sup> Khanin argues that the 500 Days Programme was populist and utopian and served primarily as El'tsin's political instrument in his struggle with Gorbachev and Union's authorities.<sup>1280</sup> Ryzhkov shares this evaluation, only accentuating its anti-government focus.<sup>1281</sup> Being afraid of restrictive fiscal and monetary policies and inevitable deterioration of living standards as a result of the implementation of the government policy, Gorbachev refused to support it and agreed on the establishment of a joint group headed by Shatalin to prepare a new draft with El'tsin without informing the prime minister and his cabinet. Gorbachev's actions were undoubtedly influenced by positive assessments of the 500 Days Programme by Western actors, his closest advisors (inclusive of Iakovlev, Cherniaev, Shakhnazarov, Medvedev and likely Shevardnadze) and many Soviet intellectuals and public figures who were opposing price increases and called for a mass privatisation, destruction of the central state apparatus managed by Ryzhkov's Council of Ministers and decentralisation of power.<sup>1282</sup> However, the joint group was dominated by El'tsin's

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<sup>1276</sup> The Inter-Regional Group aspired to be the main opposition force both in the Congress and beyond. It launched large-scale confrontation with individual Soviet bodies, supported local nationalisms and called for the annulment of the Article 6 and legalisation of strikes. In January 1990 it transformed into the radical Democratic Russia (Ryzhkov, 2007, pp. 542-543).

<sup>1277</sup> Alekseev (2020), pp. 53-54.

<sup>1278</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 102.

<sup>1279</sup> Abalkin (1991), p. 206.

<sup>1280</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 315-319.

<sup>1281</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 192.

<sup>1282</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 359, 371; Nolan (1995), p. 251.

supporters who worked separately and did not consult with the rest of the group. Under such circumstances, the project could have been hardly successful.

In September, Gorbachev decided to charge Aganbegian to draft another reform programme instead.<sup>1283</sup> Aganbegian's conception was, nonetheless, hardly acceptable for the government, for it proclaimed the superiority of republican laws over the all-union ones and the question of a single tax system was not solved satisfactorily.<sup>1284</sup> El'tsin used the situation and succeeded in pushing the Shatalin's plan through unilaterally. In September 1990, the Russian parliament embraced it and decided to implement it since November.<sup>1285</sup> This step was preceded by the Russian Supreme Soviet's July decision to establish an independent monetary and financial system. The existence of the single monetary and financial system was the main pillar of the unity of the USSR along with the CPSU. Yet Gorbachev rejected to enforce his constitutional powers and declare the Russian decision null and void. Pavlov argues that this meeting decided the destiny of the USSR and its actual dissolution long before the Belovezh Accords. Similarly, the president refused to sign a draft dissolving the Russian Supreme Soviet after the latter's unconstitutional actions.<sup>1286</sup>

Face to face with Gorbachev's passivity, the ministers were trying to convince Ryzhkov that unless Gorbachev accepted their economic programme, the council should resign. At the 4<sup>th</sup> Congress of People's Deputies in December 1990, Ryzhkov emphasised the need for extraordinary measures to halt the centrifugal and destabilising processes, while his deputy Abalkin addressed a positive role of a dictatorial power under the existing circumstances.<sup>1287</sup> The aim of the government was transparent, that is, to preserve the single economic area and gradually introduce market mechanisms into the existing planned economy without any leaps and shocks. But the situation was strongly complicated by defamation campaigns against the Council of Ministers in the media and growing populism among members of the Supreme Soviet who made efforts to intimidate and discredit individual ministers despite the fact that Ryzhkov's

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<sup>1283</sup> Ryzhkov (1992), p. 329.

<sup>1284</sup> Abalkin (1991), pp. 216-217.

<sup>1285</sup> Alekseev (2020), pp. 58-60.

<sup>1286</sup> Falin (1999b), p. 75; Pavlov (1995), pp. 130-135.

<sup>1287</sup> Abalkin (1991), pp. 277, 280. Calls for extraordinary measures and the restoration of law and order appeared in the political leadership for a long time. For instance, Kriuchkov declared at the Politburo in October that year that order had to be restored using force and accompanied by unpopular economic measures and efficient propaganda (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 540). This argumentation merged with demands for control over media on the part of such actors as Iazov, Ligachev and Ryzhkov.

last cabinet belonged to the most professional and qualified ones in the entire Soviet history.<sup>1288</sup> That year liberal socialists in a tactical alliance with nationalists escalated their offensive against neo-Leninist discourse and resorted to populism frequently.<sup>1289</sup>

The RSFSR under El'tsin's leadership resorted to anticonstitutional actions, established cooperation with separatist regions against the Soviet establishment, declared sovereignty of the RSFSR, obstructed the implementation of all-union economic reform, while setting out to restore capitalism in Russia.<sup>1290</sup> Russia started to create a parallel power structure independent of the Soviet one, resorted to the enforcement of its own policies in a wide array of fields, including the fiscal and monetary policies, and did not hesitate to take over Soviet institutions such as banks, enterprises and oil fields. All this happened well before the August coup. These actions were accompanied by hardline anti-Communist rhetoric and fierce criticism of Gorbachev.<sup>1291</sup> Hough highlights another moment to play a crucial part in the disintegration process, namely El'tsin's landslide victory over Ryzhkov in Russian presidential election in June 1991 which gave the Russian leader stronger legitimacy compared to Gorbachev who had not been elected directly by the people a year before.<sup>1292</sup> Brown observes that the Russian president was the main mover behind the dismantling of the Union and was willing to destroy the country if it served his personal ambitions and political interests.<sup>1293</sup>

The strong tendency towards populism can be demonstrated in El'tsin's criticism of Ryzhkov for the government's insistence on conducting price reforms and partial increases in prices.<sup>1294</sup> Gorbachev's concurrent conflicts with Ryzhkov and the prime minister's disagreement with the course of economic and political reforms resulted in his resignation in January 1991.<sup>1295</sup> Nenashev notes that Ryzhkov's tragedy was that he did not overcome the "complex of the general

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<sup>1288</sup> Nenashev (1993), pp. 224-225; Pavlov (1995), p. 26. Agreeing with Nenashev and Pavlov in their evaluation, Kriuchkov, at the same time, argues that Gorbachev's both prime ministers and the government as a whole underestimated the need for proactive and long-term communication and cooperation with deputies (Kriuchkov, 1997, p. 272).

<sup>1289</sup> The then general secretary paid much more attention to "conservative" opposition than the controversial actions of radical populist, nationalist and separatist actors. He would present a more balanced view only later when blaming the "vindictiveness of the reactionary forces" and the "excessive revolutionism of the radicals" for the failure of perestroika (Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002, p. 70; Gorbachev, 2021).

<sup>1290</sup> Brown (2020); Hough (1997); Khanin (2010).

<sup>1291</sup> Stat'ia El'tsina (1991).

<sup>1292</sup> Hough (1997), p. 405.

<sup>1293</sup> Brown (2020), p. 316.

<sup>1294</sup> Hough (1997), p. 306.

<sup>1295</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 20.

secretary” which made him obedient to Gorbachev at any cost.<sup>1296</sup> After Ryzhkov’s resignation, the post was offered to Iurii Masliukov, the chairman of the Gosplan, but he turned it down. Most republics supported Pavlov. When Gorbachev phoned Pavlov to say his intentions to him, the president refused to meet Pavlov in person to discuss the latter’s ideas. In his memoirs, Pavlov explains that he agreed to become premier because he still believed that he could succeed in averting the disintegration of the Soviet Union through a package of measures including price and monetary reforms which might have brought about a politico-economic breakthrough.<sup>1297</sup>

Indeed, the president’s stake on Pavlov could have indicated that the neo-Leninist discourse remained relevant and, theoretically, may have been supported by Gorbachev himself under certain circumstances again. Even though the socioeconomic developments were deteriorating and the country got to the brink of collapse, Hough asserts that Gorbachev’s position at the turn of the year was not hopeless necessarily: “He had emancipated himself from Politburo and the Central Committee control, he had removed the most important members of the Kirilenko machine with whom he had come to power, and he had rid himself of the most extreme radicals in his entourage. The police and media were in reliable hands. He also retained solid control of the USSR Congress of People’s Deputies.”<sup>1298</sup> The fact that Gorbachev succeeded in pushing the very unpopular Genadii Ianaev through as his deputy president at the Congress of People’s Deputies in December 1990 shows that his authority and power remained potentially large indeed.<sup>1299</sup> The general secretary rendered unpopular Ryzhkov and Abalkin scapegoats but he kept a majority of Ryzhkov’s team in their positions so the neo-Leninist reform course could have continued all the more so that the then finance minister became the new premier.<sup>1300</sup>

Pavlov was the first head of the Soviet government with education and professional background in economy since the 1920s. He had experience with economic management, research as well as political leadership, for he used to attend the sessions of the Politburo, Central Committee and Secretariat alike. Before his career in Gosplan, Goskomtsen and Ministry of Finance, Pavlov was engaged in drafting union budgets, which provided him with an in-depth insight into the planning mechanisms.<sup>1301</sup> He had his own conception of economic development as well as a strong political will. Kriuchkov recalls that the new premier was an advocate of the market already

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<sup>1296</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 231.

<sup>1297</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 151-154.

<sup>1298</sup> Hough (1997), p. 399.

<sup>1299</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 661.

<sup>1300</sup> Hough (1997), p. 400.

<sup>1301</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 3-4.

before 1985, being able to hold a moderate position and understand the need for a strong central state power and control during the promarket reforms. From Kriuchkov's perspective, Pavlov could lead the country out of the crisis, for he dared to take unpopular, tough measures, opposing populism but maintaining communication with the opposition.<sup>1302</sup> The problem was that the powers of government were limited institutionally and his position was undermined by objective socioeconomic factors and political circumstances. Pavlov was inferior to Gorbachev who did not support him eventually.

Pavlov was aware of the general crisis in the country, being convinced that the centre had lost control over the economy because of the hesitance with the implementation of economic reforms. The premier wanted to develop Ryzhkov's reform programme combining market with state control and planning and a strong political power.<sup>1303</sup> In his programme speech at the Supreme Soviet delivered in April, Pavlov proposed a limited privatisation in chosen branches (mostly in trade and food industries) and transformation of SOEs into stock companies with large state share to keeping control over them. The government wanted to combine liberalisation with strong indirect planning in strategic fields such as agriculture, extractive industries, and engineering, where goszakazy were to constitute between 50 and 70 per cent of production. These plans were preceded by liberalisation of 40 per cent of wholesale prices, reduction of economic ministries, increases in retail prices, and the unpopular monetary reform.<sup>1304</sup> Such measures mitigated inflationary pressures but the separation of liberalisation of wholesale prices on one hand and retail prices on the other required additional state subsidies, which deepened the state debt. Pavlov argued in favour of normalisation of production processes, structural perestroika of the economy, acceleration of scientific and technological progress, denationalisation and demonopolisation of the economy, recovery of financial system, support for business as well as implementation of a system of social guarantees. At the same time, he rejected the idea of elimination of state ownership. The goal was presented in terms of a socially oriented market economy with democratic rule of law and a federation of sovereign republics, which was to be achieved through a radical economic reform based on strong state power, law and order.<sup>1305</sup> The premier launched a price reform immediately to reduce inflationary pressures and the influence of shadow economy, creating more favourable conditions for the transition to market. Pavlov argues that the price reform was successful and did not result in a rapid rise in prices referring to

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<sup>1302</sup> Kriuchkov (1996), pp. 53-55.

<sup>1303</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), pp. 480-482.

<sup>1304</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 334-337.

<sup>1305</sup> O programme deistvii (1991).

CIA data, according to which the inflation index of retail prices increased by a mere 1.6 per cent from April to September. It indicated that the transition could have been carried out without shock therapy.<sup>1306</sup>

Moreover, another opportunity for neo-Leninist actors to take the initiative appeared at that time because the general secretary came under strong criticism from the Central Committee. In response, Gorbachev announced his resignation, but soon afterwards a majority of the members again expressed their support to their superior.<sup>1307</sup> In his last article, the former general secretary admits that he should have resigned.<sup>1308</sup> In fact, the president intensified pressure on his premier, lambasting Pavlov's June speech at the Supreme Soviet whereby Pavlov appealed to deputies to give the Cabinet of Ministers legislative initiative, strengthen its powers in economic affairs including the right to establish a united tax office and all-union authority for countering organised crime.<sup>1309</sup> Kriuchkov attended the session and observed understanding for such a request among deputies. From his point of view, deputies were largely prepared to take steps to turn the negative developments, but they were in need of a strong leader, still hoping that Gorbachev would be such. Therefore, they continued to wait and remained passive.<sup>1310</sup> Vorotnikov adds that attending deputies were shocked by the critical speeches made by Pavlov, Kriuchkov, and Pugo and tended to consider them exaggerated. Moreover, they turned confused because several days later Gorbachev stated that Pavlov's speech had been a result of misunderstanding and mistakes.<sup>1311</sup> The premier and his ministers did not oppose the general secretary's statement and no powers were transferred to the government as a result.<sup>1312</sup>

By mid-1991, Pavlov understood definitively that the president did not want to discuss the essential issues with the government. The premier was not informed about many matters, being given information only as a member of the Security Council in a wide array of cases. It applied to the Novo-Ogarevo process and the negotiations about the new Union Treaty. Pavlov opposed Gorbachev's conception, believing that it would destroy the single economic area, which was

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<sup>1306</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 237, 247.

<sup>1307</sup> Nenashev (1993), p. 126.

<sup>1308</sup> Gorbachev (2021).

<sup>1309</sup> Pavlov's proposal was supported particularly by Iazov, Kriuchkov, Pugo and deputies from the Soiuz faction (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 705).

<sup>1310</sup> Kriuchkov (1997), p. 420.

<sup>1311</sup> In his memoirs, Gorbachev calls Pavlov's actions in the Supreme Soviet "irresponsible" and "scandalous", interpreting them as a "new attack against the president and his policies from revanchist forces" (Gorbachev, 1995a, p. 594).

<sup>1312</sup> Vorotnikov (2003), pp. 488-490.

unacceptable from his point of view. Even though the draft of the new treaty was classified as “top secret”, Pavlov made some copies and called upon Gorbachev, Luk'ianov, and other relevant actors to meet and discuss further steps and decided to leak the document to the media while preparing commentaries and suggestions to preserve the single economic area.<sup>1313</sup> The cabinet's initiatives were, however, ignored. He sought strong political power to carry out reforms, being inspired by the examples of modernisation in Asian countries inclusive of China.<sup>1314</sup> Pavlov made positive references to China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam where economic reform took the lead unlike the Soviet Union.<sup>1315</sup> However, the premier eventually failed in restoring the single fiscal and monetary systems face to face with the unilateral and secessionist actions taken by individual union republics. On the contrary, Gorbachev reached an agreement with Russia's leader Boris El'tsin and his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbaiev that Pavlov would be dismissed once the new Union Treaty is concluded.<sup>1316</sup> Premier's involvement in the August coup seems a quite logical response to the institutional powerlessness and obstructions from both liberal socialists and populists amidst the accelerating crisis.

The coup can be seen as the last attempt to enforce the hegemony of neo-Leninist discourse. Interpreting the GKChP, I do not share a perspective, according to which the August coup represented an “anti-perestroika”.<sup>1317</sup> On August 18 and 19, the Committee issued a series of documents defining the new *modus operandi*. These declared the introduction of a state of emergency which will be limited to six months, allegiance to reforms and existing international obligations, priority of Soviet laws over republican ones, annulment of laws and administrative decisions breaching the union constitution, fight against shadow economy, corruption and speculation and commitment to a constitutional solution of Gorbachev's destiny.<sup>1318</sup> Vice President Ianaev even expressed hope that Gorbachev would return to the office once possible.<sup>1319</sup> Luk'ianov summarises the goals of the GKChP as follows: safeguarding the socialist choice, preserving the Soviet constitution, maintaining the USSR as a state entity and reversing the economic crisis. The State Committee claimed allegiance to perestroika and its original goals, which were described as initiating the dynamic development and democratisation of social life.

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<sup>1313</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 11-17.

<sup>1314</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 331-337.

<sup>1315</sup> Pavlov (1995), pp. 48-49.

<sup>1316</sup> Hanson (2014), p. 233; Khanin (2010), p. 337.

<sup>1317</sup> Arbatov (2002), p. 427.

<sup>1318</sup> Kriuchkov (1996), pp. 164-172.

<sup>1319</sup> GKChP (2011), p. 18. Interestingly, Shevardnadze believed that Gorbachev was involved in the coup to a certain extent (Shevardnadze, 2009, p. 212).

However, the new leaders were convinced that the country had become uncontrollable and extremist forces attempted to destroy the USSR and assume political power. From their point of view, the transition to the market had been carried out in a chaotic and uncontrolled way and resulted in regional, departmental, group and individual egoism, war of laws, destruction of a single economic area and consequent slump in living standards and a boom of speculation, violence, crime, malign propaganda and shadow economy. The crisis was depicted as a “time of troubles” with utterly negative historical connotations and extraordinary measures—inclusive of suspension of activities of any subject which would threaten normalisation, suspension of the right to demonstrations and strikes, control over media and dissolution of all institutions and acts which were in breach of the union legislation—were to reverse the crisis spiral. At the same time, GKChP referred to the need for “genuine democratic processes”, consistent and gradual reform policies, defence of the interests of a social majority, stress on discipline, and focus on food and housing problems. In economic terms, the goal was defined as a pluralist regulated economy including private business and ownership.<sup>1320</sup>

The appearance of the GKChP was not unexpected and the agenda coincided with the issues discussed months before. Many members of the political leadership called on Gorbachev to introduce a state of emergency in chosen regions repeatedly. In August, this demand was reiterated and accompanied by an appeal for resignation unless a state of emergency would be introduced to restore law and order in accordance with the constitution. Despite the president’s aversion to the use of force, he ordered the deployment of the military in Moscow in March 1991. A month later, the Security Council discussed various scenarios of the state of emergency. In April, the Security Council debated Gorbachev’s order about the introduction of extraordinary measures in some industries needed to avoid an economic collapse. Gosbank repeatedly warned the general secretary against serious problems in monetary and credit systems and obstruction of transferring obligatory revenues to the union budget on the part of the republics. In May, Gosbank called for the annulment of republican acts violating the union legislation and asked Gorbachev to grant Gosbank’s chairman extraordinary powers.<sup>1321</sup>

Warnings also came from the CPSU Central Committee and its departments. A June document described the crisis of financial system and union budget and destruction of the single market. It went on saying that republics blocked financial transfers and central bodies were deprived of income for conducting state policies while the Cabinet of Ministers was being discredited as a

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<sup>1320</sup> GKChP (2011), pp. 4-11.

<sup>1321</sup> Prezidentu SSSR Gorbachevu (1991).

consequence of the lack of power to act accordingly. Therefore, the officials supported the government's efforts to introduce extraordinary measures to restore and strengthen the single financial and banking systems.<sup>1322</sup> Similarly, KGB Chairman Kriuchkov warned at a closed session of the Supreme Soviet in July that the country was on the brink of collapse and called for restoring law and order. The main causes of the accelerating crisis were identified with the struggle for power launched by "anti-state, separatist and other extremist forces", proliferation of terror, organised crime, ethnic conflicts and nationalism and disintegration of economic ties.<sup>1323</sup> Kriuchkov's speech at the Supreme Soviet anticipated and largely coincided with a public declaration made by GKChP on August 18. It is worth noticing that, at a session of the Cabinet of Ministers in early August, Gorbachev himself admitted that the deteriorating situation required extraordinary measures.<sup>1324</sup>

The August coup thus only accelerated these tendencies. Miller argues that the GKChP apparently wanted to follow the government economic course and carry through the agenda represented by Premier Pavlov in many respects. Given the fact that the putschists were to rely on support from military, agricultural, and industrial complexes as well as party and state apparatuses, that is, the structures usually depicted as conservative, they tended to avoid substantial financial cuts in these sectors. It follows that the GKChP could have opted to stabilise the macroeconomic situation through the reduction of consumption and demand. "This was the Tiananmen model. The Chinese cut credit growth, reducing consumption and investment," argues Miller.<sup>1325</sup> Given the lack of support from both Gorbachev and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Vice President Gennadii Ianaev took a decision to dissolve the GKChP. Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Anatolii Luk'ianov concludes that the coup—even though he rejects such an appellation—hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union and power takeover by the radical forces.<sup>1326</sup> A similar stance on this point is adopted by Shakhnazarov according to whom the coup or "conspiracy" caused the collapse of the USSR which is described as one of the biggest tragedies in the world history by him. He opines that if there was a leader and actorness on the part of the GKChP, the coup would have been successful, for even the republics were cautious, waiting for the results passively. It indicates that they were prepared to recognise new

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<sup>1322</sup> O krizise biudzhethno-finansovoi sistemy (1991).

<sup>1323</sup> Kriuchkov (1996), pp. 387-392.

<sup>1324</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 686; Luk'ianov (1993), pp. 9-17.

<sup>1325</sup> Miller (2016), p. 170.

<sup>1326</sup> Luk'ianov (1993), pp. 25-28.

realities emerging from the coup.<sup>1327</sup> Luk'ianov notes that upon the dissolution of the GKChP, the CPSU was politically and ideologically paralysed and, therefore, was not able to counter rival discourses even though the overwhelming majority of rank-and-file stood up for reforms and modernisation within the socialist framework.<sup>1328</sup> Such a scenario, however, would be out of question with the debacle of the GKChP and the failure of the coup. Neo-Leninist discourse was defeated for good.

#### 6.4.2 *The fall of neo-Leninism and the end of Soviet history*

It would be misleading and simplistic to reduce the causes of the collapse to the actions and intentions of a handful of political actors. Cohen, Solnick and other authors address the so-called nomenklatura privatisation as an important factor in the collapse.<sup>1329</sup> I indicated above that weakening discipline and control in the Brezhnevite period had created favourable conditions for the enforcement of particular interests of lower-level officials and economic actors. Gorbachev's offensive against the party structure as the backbone of the entire system in conjunction with the economic and political restructuring inclusive of the introduction of market elements and non-state forms of ownership as well as the open rejection of the Communist ideology at the top echelons of power enabled the gradual takeover of enterprises and financial assets by high-level officials, management and their associates. Even though Cohen disagrees with those who claim that nomenklatura privatisation was the primary causal factor in the breakup, he considers it the crucial enabling factor with the bureaucratic nomenklatura being the main beneficiary of the collapse.<sup>1330</sup>

Khanin focuses on the related phenomenon of "nomenklatura-mafia capitalism" or a merger of shadow economy, criminal structures, and nomenklatura actors whose common denominator was financial benefit and strengthening of both political and economic power under completely new circumstances. Organised crime became an important economic factor in the late Soviet Union. According to the Soviet Ministry of the Interior, there were more than 5,000 criminal groups comprising of up to 250,000 people and penetrating virtually all economic areas by mid-1991.<sup>1331</sup> A large portion of the shadow economy did not legalise its business activities and the share of the shadow economy might have accounted for 22 per cent in the RSFSR in 1991.<sup>1332</sup> The emergence

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<sup>1327</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), pp. 437-440.

<sup>1328</sup> Luk'ianov (1993), pp. 81, 83.

<sup>1329</sup> Cohen (2011); Solnick (1999).

<sup>1330</sup> Cohen (2011), p. 139.

<sup>1331</sup> Khanin (2010), pp. 133-134.

<sup>1332</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 173.

and successful development of business were largely dependent on the connections with the state bodies, which made the politico-economic environment corrupt, structurally weak and vulnerable. Moreover, market mechanisms and capitalist elements were expanding particularly in trade and broker-related fields instead of primary production, which posed a serious structural problem, not to mention the distorted entrepreneurial ethic based on the priority of satisfying the immediate needs and luxury instead of long-term investment, sustainability and rentability.<sup>1333</sup> In other words, the chaotic, unmanaged transition to market produced enormous structural imbalances and deviations and contradicted the people's demands and preferences as well as the programme of both neo-Leninist and liberal socialist reformers.

Perestroika under Gorbachev's leadership evolved from neo-Leninist reform to the liberal socialist reform which got out of control and resulted in neoliberal transformation. Even though Shakhnazarov interprets perestroika in terms of Russia's "march to the West", such a perspective is hardly defensible face to face with the support of reforms on the part of neo-Leninists who would have never embraced the reforms should they were designed in such a way since the beginning.<sup>1334</sup> General secretary's later turn to the West was rather related to the dissatisfaction with the domestic reform process and motivated by the endeavour to be recognised as a world-class leader.<sup>1335</sup> This ambition coincided with Gorbachev's aspiration to invent a revolutionary programme as Lenin did.<sup>1336</sup> Hough describes Gorbachev's fatal miscalculation as follows: "Gorbachev was mistaken in fearing collective resistance to reform on the part of the bureaucracy and the party apparatus. The Chinese had a better conception of the relation of the individual and collective interests of the bureaucrats. Gorbachev was also mistaken in believing that an economy and polity can continue to function acceptably if its basic rules, institutions, and incentive systems have been destroyed and have not simultaneously been replaced by others. In such a situation, the pursuit of individual self-interest produces chaos and anarchy."<sup>1337</sup>

Falin argues that Gorbachev enjoyed wide support from the party apparatus at first and he forfeited it only later. Similarly, Burlatskii observes in this regard that many officials and functionaries were in favour of economic and cultural reforms, but they opposed excessive democratisation and glasnost'.<sup>1338</sup> The director of the International Department (1988–1991)

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<sup>1333</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 143.

<sup>1334</sup> Miller (2016), pp. 11-12.

<sup>1335</sup> Ellman & Kontorovich (1997), p. 264.

<sup>1336</sup> Boldin (2003), p. 133.

<sup>1337</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 21-22.

<sup>1338</sup> Cohen (1989), p. 194.

recalls that the general secretary became suspicious and inimical to the apparatus and the Politburo as well as to delegates at the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference and the 28<sup>th</sup> Congress even though they approved his line.<sup>1339</sup> Similarly, Burlatskii as well as Kriuchkov observe that the fatal problem was that Gorbachev did not understand (or did not want to understand) that the implementation of such comprehensive reforms required a strong state power all the more so because of the deep conservatism and passivity of a large part of society.<sup>1340</sup>

Over a few years, the Soviet system changed fundamentally. As Cohen points out, the perestroika years became a period of the broadest democracy and freedom in the Russian history. In this regard, Gorbachev demonstrated strong decisiveness and vigour.<sup>1341</sup> However, these qualities disappeared when it came to economy. Hough explains this paradox referring to the absence of theories, models, and blueprints of such a transformation.<sup>1342</sup> Nonetheless, both domestic intellectual sources and external analogues did exist as demonstrated by the above research. It seems that the main problem why the general secretary marginalised them was the increasingly strong influence of liberal socialist discourse which did not accept neo-Leninist policies.

English highlights the role of Westernist intellectuals in shaping Gorbachev's outlook and Brown adds that Gorbachevian reformists transformed themselves into Western-style social democrats and their political beliefs became closer to that of Eduard Bernstein, Willy Brandt and Felipe González than Lenin.<sup>1343</sup> Hough, in turn, argues that Gorbachev's and liberal socialists' aversion to the party and state apparatus, Soviet bureaucracy and the authoritarian way of governance was related to Russian intelligentsia's traditional distrust of the state, military as well as entrepreneurship which made them a mostly nonconstructive, seditious and utterly nonconformist social stratum.<sup>1344</sup> Cherniaev admits that the negative and hostile attitude on the

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<sup>1339</sup> Falin (1999a), pp. 410-412.

<sup>1340</sup> Burlatskii (1996), p. 304; Kriuchkov (1997), p. 270.

<sup>1341</sup> Cohen (2011), p. 148. In contrast, Gorbachev exhibited high aversion to risk. Pushing through the multi-candidate elections, he insisted on being elected by the Central Committee only. When running for the presidential office, he did not consent to the direct election. Such inconsistency made him less and less credible (Nenashev, 1993, pp. 346-347). The Soviet minister of information and the press sums up this inconsistency and paradoxicality in the following way: "He wanted to be a great reformer, first democrat among others but he, at the same time, desired to remain the leader of the people, party and state, maintaining the power, methods and relations with his entourage based on uncompromising obedience" (Nenashev, 1993, p. 345).

<sup>1342</sup> Hough (1997), p. 491.

<sup>1343</sup> English (2000), p. 14; Brown (2004), p. 11; Brown (2007), p. 289. During his trip to Belarus in February 1991, Gorbachev put forward an idea of "political centrism" based on socialist orientation, common sense and nation-wide agreement as a moderate path between Stalinism and Brezhnevism on one hand and "adventurist radicalism" on the other (Gorbachev, 1995b, pp. 423, 524).

<sup>1344</sup> Hough (1997), pp. 491-493.

part of the intelligentsia towards the state manifested itself even during perestroika, which had serious consequences for the reform process and the evolution of the anti-Communist camp.<sup>1345</sup> Khanin makes a connection between the collapse of perestroika and the intellectual weakness and helplessness of the Soviet elites and society in general and the lack of strategic considerations and abilities in particular. According to the Russian author, one of the exceptions was Premier Pavlov who was, however, not given the chance to implement his programme.<sup>1346</sup> Zubok asserts that Gorbachev became mentally and ideologically dependent on the West, which alienated him from both neo-Leninist reformers and a large majority of the public.<sup>1347</sup> Burlatskii, who was close to the opposition Inter-Regional Group of Deputies, argues that the major mistake was to implement foreign, exogenous patterns while the principles of democracy, freedom and market contrasted with the traditional forms of Russian statehood, empire and equality.<sup>1348</sup>

Westernist narratives were increasingly influential thanks to glasnost' and the prominent role of certain advisors to Gorbachev such as Iakovlev, Arbatov, Aganbegian, Cherniaev and Shakhnazarov. Some radical reformers and Westernisers (including Arbatov) appreciated the developments in China for many years, considering them progressive and inspirational. However, their stance largely changed no later than in 1989, even though Iakovlev made positive remarks about Deng's reforms even after the post-Tiananmen period in April 1990.<sup>1349</sup> It indicates that despite the deep allegiance to the Western world were there conceptions transcending the narrow limits of Westernism. In general, nonetheless, perestroika Westernists did not want the Soviet Union to be modelled on the "neo-Leninist" China but rather on the idealised West. The efforts to copy the Western patterns, whatever they were in fact, brought about a collapse. Historian Hough comments on such a contradictory enterprise in the following way: "The most fundamental problem of all was that the democratic advisers advocated economic measures certain to lead to conditions that would require the use of force and other authoritarian measures to maintain stability."<sup>1350</sup> Vladimir Lukin admits that the overemphasis on the Western patterns

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<sup>1345</sup> Cherniaev (1993), pp. 99-100.

<sup>1346</sup> Khanin (2010), p. 360.

<sup>1347</sup> Zubok (2009), p. 318.

<sup>1348</sup> Burlatskii (1996), p. 237. Two years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev identified socialism with humanism and considered it a "meta-ideology". His interpretation of socialism became normative and value-based with freedom, equality, justice and solidarity in the core. It synthesises socialism with liberalism (Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002, pp. 8, 156).

<sup>1349</sup> Iakovlev (2008), p. 454.

<sup>1350</sup> Hough (1997), p. 213.

and the pressure on their immediate implementation in the Soviet Union posed a problem indeed and concludes that this attitude was utterly ahistorical.<sup>1351</sup>

The growing influence of the Western ideas, incentives, and actions in the country contributed to the crisis of the Communist ideology, identity, and inner integrity of the Soviet society and opened the space for the collapse of the system.<sup>1352</sup> According to the former Soviet president, the very core of his revolutionary perestroika was its focus on the individual and his needs along with the priority of panhuman interests and values.<sup>1353</sup> Such a universalist paradigm, however, led to the underestimation of socioeconomic factors and abandonment of national interests. Unlike Deng Xiaoping, Gorbachev remained excessively ideological—as Ryzhkov puts it, the essential problem was that politics had priority over economy.<sup>1354</sup> It corresponded with the primary role of ideology and its inflexibility which was embedded in the Stalinist system. Its heritage may perhaps be seen in the universalist aspirations of Gorbachevian global perestroika as well, which was intertwined with his political ambitions and the need for international recognition.<sup>1355</sup> In his private conversation with Shakhnazarov in late 1990, Gorbachev admitted that he wanted perestroika to be a global revolution which would establish a new political model worldwide. From this perspective, Soviet perestroika was to initiate a global transition to a “humane, democratic socialism”.<sup>1356</sup> In contrast, Deng was more pragmatic and modest and did not perceive the Soviet reformers as his rivals.

One can conclude that Gorbachev overestimated the level of development of the USSR, believing that it was needless to develop market mechanisms to enhance the means of production and relations of production to higher levels. Deng’s pragmatism was paradoxically closer to both classical Marxism and Leninism than Gorbachev’s idealism with the vision of democratic socialism. If Shakhnazarov argues that Gorbachev was likely the first Russian (Soviet) leader with a Western mindset and that he eventually opted to bring his country to “civilisational mainstream” and “return” Russia to Europe, we can say now with certainty that his mission

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<sup>1351</sup> Lukin (2018), p. 165.

<sup>1352</sup> Zuenko (2021), p. 106.

<sup>1353</sup> Gorbachev (2021).

<sup>1354</sup> Ryzhkov (1995), p. 63. Gorbachev, in turn, rejects Ryzhkov’s position as “technocratic”, advocating the priority of politics (Gorbachev & Mlynář, 2002, p. 111).

<sup>1355</sup> Zubok (2009), p. 310. The vanguardist and universalist notion of perestroika appeared quite soon and it gradually gained strength. At a plenum of the Central Committee in May 1988, Vice President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences Evgenii Velikhov called perestroika the “most important historical event in the world after the war” (Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev, 2008, p. 383).

<sup>1356</sup> Cherniaev, Veber & Medvedev (2008), p. 659.

failed.<sup>1357</sup> Despite that, the first and the last Soviet president insisted until his last days that his direction had been correct.<sup>1358</sup> In a conversation with his university fellow from Czechoslovakia, Gorbachev reiterates that perestroika was a successful enterprise: “We did what had to be done: we gave freedom, glasnost and political pluralism; we gave democracy. We broke apart, dismantled and destroyed the totalitarian regime and freed the individual.”<sup>1359</sup>

## 6.5 Findings

Reforms in China and the Soviet Union shared many similarities at different stages of the process, but the results were contrary. In the Asian country, the reform pattern was based on Four Modernisations and Four Cardinal Principles, which limited the scope of action structurally and put the development of economic basis and productive forces first to the detriment of the relations of production and class struggle. The rethinking of the socialist past and present did not undermine the political and ideological fundamentals of the Communist regime. The Chinese succeeded in merging socialism with market and eventually introduced the model of a socialist market economy, which constituted the basis of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The chapter indicates that the question of political reform was present in political, academic, and public discourses, and some of the prominent reformers including Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang advocated substantial revision of the political system and its liberalisation. However, political reform was only secondary in comparison with economic restructuring, which was in fact revolutionary.

The Party could have relied on initiative and support from below and the tactics of local experimentation, gradualism, and moderation on the part of the political leadership proved successful, as it prevented excessive social polarisation, being instrumental in preserving a wide consensus and cohesion. The Chinese reform model was based on a radical economic reform combining market with planning, the coexistence of different forms of ownership, limited political reform, safeguarding the ruling role of the Communist Party and authoritarian governance, preference for economic development to both ideological orthodoxy and politics, de-

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<sup>1357</sup> Shakhnazarov (2001), pp. 499, 508.

<sup>1358</sup> Gorbachev (2021).

<sup>1359</sup> Gorbachev & Mlynář (2002), p. 91. The argumentation changed only slightly compared to his last presidential speech from December 25, 1991 when Gorbachev advocated the course of reforms and pointed to the following achievements: (1) elimination of a totalitarian system; (2) introduction of democracy; (3) legalisation of different forms of ownership; (4) conclusion of the Cold War; (5) opening up of the country and the end of meddling into internal affairs of the others; (6) making the Soviet Union a forerunner of perestroika of the entire world civilisation (Gorbachev, 1995a, pp. 6-7).

ideologisation of external relations, peaceful coexistence and engagement with capitalist countries, abandonment of the idea of export of socialist revolution and anti-imperialism, recognition of a peculiar Chinese modernity and socialist civilisation paired with the revival of prerevolutionary patterns, gradualism, experimentation, and pragmatism. From my perspective, this model largely coincided with the neo-Leninist discourse in the late Soviet Union.

Although Stalinism had a decisive impact on the evolution of the Soviet model, reform projects existed after Stalin's death. Nikita Khrushchev introduced new concepts to the hegemonic discourse, however, no real reform of the economic system occurred irrespective of the experiments with the link system and khozraschet. These adjustments were embraced by Aleksei Kosygin, who supervised the reform programme under Leonid Brezhnev. However, it did not bring about any substantial changes. Instead, the Soviet leader advocated the notions of developed socialism and acceleration of scientific and technological progress. At the same time, some academicians were elaborating innovative ideas, and several high-profile institutes and party departments became engines of reform thinking. It enables us to speak about intrasystem dissent and institutional amphibiousness, which contributed to the establishment of a counterdiscourse against the neo-Stalinist hegemony.

Reforms in the 1980s and early 1990s largely built on both the preceding reform concepts and heterodox thinking in academia and party and state apparatuses. I argue that the inception of perestroika can be traced back to 1983 when Andropov started to implement reform policies including economic experiments, and the Politburo commission on economic reform, headed by Nikolai Ryzhkov, was set up. Iurii Andropov and other reform-minded actors wanted perestroika to go far beyond Kosygin's reform. The analysis leads me to the assertion that the first stage of perestroika was shaped by the neo-Leninist discourse and resembled Dengism. At first, Gorbachev focused on the acceleration of socioeconomic development and scientific and technological progress, improvement of discipline and planning mechanisms, introduction of real khozraschet, enhancement of welfare state, glasnost' and peaceful coexistence. The implementation of link system and leasing, legalisation of individual labour activity, increase in the role of financial and market instruments, liberalisation of foreign trade, and support for cooperatives or joint ventures all had many coincident features with the Chinese model. Despite side effects and mistakes, the economic perestroika did not produce fatal problems at least until 1988. The main problem was the lack of political will to carry out price reform and related unpopular fiscal and monetary measures in conjunction with accelerating centrifugal tendencies emerging from radical political changes and excessive glasnost'.

No later than in 1988, when the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference occurred, the two strongest discourses during the reform period, neo-Leninism and liberal socialism, openly clashed, and the latter began to dominate as the general secretary was taking its side. The Neo-Leninist concept of reform was advocated especially by the Ryzhkov government, Egor Ligachev and other prominent party officials, who, *inter alia*, made positive references to developments in China. The research reveals that the economy-first and authoritarian-style approach to reform of the Stalinist model was usually typical of the *government* representatives both under Brezhnev and Gorbachev. However, the structurally weak role of the body undermined the potential of such a discourse, which was addressed by most prime ministers including Nikolai Ryzhkov and Valentin Pavlov. The institutional redesign of the political system in 1988–1991 did not change the status of the government. The general secretary resorted to the redefinition of the role of the Communist Party in the Soviet system and launched an offensive against “conservative” bodies that included the party secretariat. The attack on the Party, accompanied by endless media campaigns and political pressure from new centres of power, resembled Mao’s “Bombard the Headquarters” campaign. The year 1988 can thus be considered a turning point of perestroika, entailing the power decline of the neo-Leninist discourse.

The government plan for the transition to a socialist market economy was put forward in mid-1989, but it was opposed by Gorbachev as well as populist and nationalist actors. The unilateral separatist actions taken by Russia in the following months and years posed one of the most serious threats to the Soviet Union and resulted in the actual dismantling of the unity of the country, which was based on the centralised party structure and single monetary and financial systems. The failure of the August coup only made the disintegration process obvious. Even though an in-depth assessment of the GKChP is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the relevant point is that the events can be interpreted as the last attempt to enforce the hegemony of neo-Leninist discourse. In this line of reasoning, it was aimed to continue perestroika but in different terms which were close to Dengism.

By that time, however, the president was far from the neo-Leninist perspective on the world. He accepted a liberal socialist paradigm which dictated the priority of political reform and idealist foreign policy. It contributed to the end of a wide consensus between both discourses but also to the introduction of the broadest freedom in the Russian history.<sup>1360</sup> It is beyond any doubt that the neo-Leninist actors would have not allowed as much freedom and democracy (from Western

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<sup>1360</sup> In this context, *freedom* is meant as *svoboda*, not *vol'nitsa*.

point of view) as liberal socialists did, but it does not imply that the neo-Leninist discourse was against perestroika and reforms of the Stalinist model. *Tout au contraire, neo-Leninism was a Soviet parallel of Dengism, and neo-Leninist perestroika was a historical reality.* Moreover, the analysis shows several moments when the neo-Leninist discourse might have broken the liberal socialist hegemony after 1988.

# 7 Conclusion

Dissertation research based on constructivist foundations succeeded in answering the questions formulated in the Introduction. Partial findings were presented at the end of each chapter, so it is time to proceed to a summary and a final synthesis. By doing this, I will follow the individual research questions.

1	Were the socioeconomic conditions in the Soviet Union and China coincident in light of the reform of Stalinist and Maoist models?
	Allowing for socioeconomic affinities and differences, was Dengism applicable in the Soviet Union?

Socioeconomic conditions and variables were not coincident. There were differences in the political, economic and external models as well as in terms of cultural patterns, civilisational trajectory, as well as in the overall level of socioeconomic development. Ahead of the reform period, the Stalinist model in the Soviet Union was characterised by decelerating extensive growth, tendency towards stagnation, exhaustion of sources of growth, impotence of a qualitative economic upgrade and oligarchisation. At the same time, Stalinism had enabled the country to reach strategic parity with the West and become a leader of the world anti-imperialist movement. The model provided the population with social stability and welfare state, still far from the crisis. As a result, there was low social and political demand for reform and no *immediate* need for reform of socialism.

Quite the contrary, Maoist policies after 1958 gradually led to a grave socioeconomic crisis, economic failure, and international isolation. It gave birth to a strong social demand for stabilisation, greater economic freedom paired with market mechanisms, and peaceful development. There was an immediate need for reform, which found expression in the revision of external policies in the 1970s and reform and opening up since 1978. The country was underdeveloped in many areas, remaining of predominantly rural character with no welfare state and low levels of education and urbanisation. The demand for politico-economic “normalisation” merged with the Maoist “tradition” of decentralisation and people’s creative activity, which was a crucial precondition for economic reform.

Regardless of these differences and the varied degree of urgency, the general task of reform lied ahead of Soviet and Chinese Communists alike. Both countries shared the Leninist political

system based on the dominance of the Communist Party. This structural factor dictated the need for political control over the economic reform within which decentralisation and liberalisation must have been managed by the Party if the self-reproduction of the political and ideological superstructure was to be maintained. Socioeconomic differences between the Soviet Union and China did not hinder the application of Dengism in the first socialist country.<sup>1361</sup> From this perspective, implementation of the Chinese reform model was possible at the macro level with different policies at the micro level. However, a stronger conservatism of the Soviet society and longer-term existence and inertia of the Stalinist model highlighted the need for strong political power and authoritarian governance because the Party and state were the primary engines of reform in contrast to China, where the demand for reform was distributed among the political bodies and population much more evenly.

2	Was China relevant to the Soviet leadership and its policy choices and decision-making?
	Did bilateral relations and Soviet perception of the country enable and were supportive of the implementation of Dengism in the Soviet Union?

Since the establishment of the Communist regime in Russia, China was the most important country in the Third World for Moscow. The Asian country affected both the development of the Soviet Union itself and the shape of the Cold War. The Soviets were involved in China and interfered in the country’s internal affairs. In the 1950s, Beijing was one of the most important partners for the Soviets, and their alliance constituted the backbone of the International Communist Movement. Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s adventurism opened the door for China to seek leadership in the International Communist Movement. Mao’s leftist policies were to construct an alternative model of socialism and surpass the Soviet Union. However, the great controversy between the two countries and the intense competition in the Third World resulted in open hostility and military clashes. Despite certain efforts to restore normal relations, Moscow resorted to containment of China by controlling allies’ policies towards the Asian country through Interkit and other mechanisms. The China factor also became inherent in the Soviet-American relationship.

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<sup>1361</sup> Dengism was defined by the following features in the present dissertation: Radical economic reform combining market with planning, coexistence of different forms of ownership, experimentation and pragmatism, limited political reform safeguarding the ruling role of the Party, preference for economic development, de-ideologisation of external relations, peaceful coexistence and engagement with capitalist countries, abandonment of anti-imperialism and recognition of Chinese modernity and civilisation.

China's relevance to the Soviet leadership can also be deduced from the prominent presence of China-related issues on the agenda of party congresses and in speeches and other materials from almost all high-level politicians, including Politburo members. The same applies to Brezhnev's notes and diaries, which demonstrate an ambiguous position on the Asian country, the lack of knowledge and understanding, as well as the acceptance of the confrontational nature of bilateral relations since the first months of Brezhnev's tenure. The leader's narrative started to change in the early 1980s, which was connected with the rise of neo-Leninist counterdiscourse. Both Andropov and Chernenko were in favour of normalisation of bilateral relations, but the breakthrough occurred only under Gorbachev, who eliminated influential neo-Stalinist actors, who made their carriers by stirring up confrontations with Moscow's neighbour, and dissolved the respective institutional instruments. Gorbachev highlighted the significance of the Asia-Pacific region in general and China in particular for the Soviet internal and external development and managed to recognise the achievements and advantages of Dengism in many respects.

China's modernisation attracted the attention of political leaders, including Egor Ligachev, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Aleksandr Iakovlev and Eduard Shevardnadze. Similarly, most Soviet intellectuals believed that the Chinese path was viable and that the Soviet Union might have drawn positive lessons from the Asian country. Interestingly, the most positive references to China and her reforms were made by liberal socialists and Westernists, in general. However, the situation reversed in 1989 when the sides reached normalisation. While Moscow attacked Maoist leftism at first, later it began to criticise the rightist turn under Deng's leadership, and eventually it castigated the suppression of the opposition in 1989. Gorbachev abandoned the neo-Leninist discourse and his view of China deteriorated rapidly. The paths of the two countries split again.

Bilateral relations were developing and improving only gradually and slowly at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. The problem was posed in particular by China's "three obstacles". Clearly, progress at the political level was conditioned by a change of paradigm, especially on the Soviet side. This tendency started to gain ground in 1980, but the persisting hegemony of neo-Stalinism obstructed cooperation with Beijing and the adoption of Dengism. In contrast, neo-Leninism and liberal socialism were initially more or less positive for the China reform model. During perestroika, however, the hegemonic discourse shifted towards Westernism, and neo-Leninism lost its former position. Liberal socialism's priority to political reform and the negative evaluation of China's post-1989 course went against the implementation of Dengism in the country.

China was a "significant other" for the Soviets. China influenced both the internal and external policies of the Soviet Union in one way or another, being an important factor in Soviet policy

choices and decision-making. The period 1985–1989 was the most favourable for the adoption of the Chinese reform model from the point of view of Soviet perceptions of China and the dynamic of bilateral relations combined.

<b>3</b>	Were at least some discourses compatible with the Chinese reform model?
	Did discursive factors enable the Soviets to implement Dengism?

Between 1978 and 1991, three discourses succeeded in achieving hegemony—neo-Stalinism, neo-Leninism, and liberal socialism. Each of them had coincident features with Dengism in some respects, but it turns out that only one of this triad can be considered a Soviet parallel of the Chinese model.

Neo-Stalinism was consistent with Dengism in terms of internal political model, final goals, and civilisational embeddedness. The discourse stressed the leading role of the Communist Party and monopartism. Unlike Dengism, neo-Stalinism presented itself in universalist terms as a model for every country at the same stage of development. This universalism corresponded to a socialist internationalism that envisaged a hierarchical structure of the commonwealth and the International Communist Movement. The neo-Stalinist perspective on international relations through the prism of a struggle between two antagonist systems undermined the concurrent efforts for peaceful coexistence and détente. A strong position on anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and the class nature of international relations complicated cooperation with Western countries and delegitimised substantial reforms. Insistence on Stalinist economic model and its principles excluded any conception of a mixed economy and implementation of market and individual ownership. It follows that neo-Stalinism was largely incompatible with Dengism, and the Soviet leaders could thus hardly implement the Chinese reform pattern under such circumstances.

Neo-Leninism abandoned many fundamentals of neo-Stalinism. Instead, it introduced the concept of developing socialism and established a chain of equivalence with elements such as acceleration of socioeconomic development, people’s vital creativity, activation of human factor, and socialist pluralism of opinions, interests, and needs. The discourse constructed a more dynamic and pluralist conception of socialism with quite wide democratisation, which applied to intraparty affairs, delineation between party and state bodies, autonomy of soviets, and competitive elections to local soviets. Neo-Leninism insisted on preserving the ruling role of

the Communist Party and limited political reform. Despite the emphasis on democratisation and the interest in political perestroika, economic development and reform (“acceleration”) were given priority. The radical and comprehensive reform and qualitative update were to be based on a combination of central planning, market, decentralisation, economic democracy, and pluralism of ownership forms with the only exception of private ownership. Concurrently, military anti-imperialism was replaced by political, economic, and ideological competition with capitalist countries with peace as a universal, supraclass value in the centre. Stress was put on the revival of détente and opening up, which found its expression in the concept of new political thinking. The latter postulated the priority of panhuman values and the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the world irrespective of the existence of different socioeconomic systems, imperialism, and class struggle. Overall, neo-Leninism demonstrated a high degree of congruence with Dengism in all main regards.

On the contrary, this did not apply to liberal socialism which set the priority of political reform. The latter implied political pluralism (multipartism) as an essential feature of “humane and democratic socialism”. The Soviet past was delegitimised and rejected as an authoritarian-bureaucratic and totalitarian system, which had nothing in common with socialism. Socialism was instead identified with a normative idea and a moral category. Therefore, liberal socialism was typical of “historical nihilism” and moralism. In economic terms, the discourse envisaged a regulated market economy or a socialist market economy with private ownership and marginal role of planning. Liberal socialism was of universalist and globalist character, which gave up the Eurasian identity and cultural particularism in favour of a vision of new internationalism, panhuman interests, and world civilisation. Moreover, the latter was largely identified with Western modernity. The principal concepts of peaceful coexistence and class struggle, as well as the idea of a multilayered confrontation between the two camps, were replaced with global cooperation, common creativity, and global perestroika. Apparently, liberal socialism moved away from Dengism compared to neo-Leninism. The points of conjunction can be found mostly in the economic and external models, which was, however, insufficient for adopting the Chinese reform pattern. Mutual divergence and animosities were amplified by the priority of politics and moralism in liberal socialism over the economy. This made both discourses incompatible in the upshot.

Discourse analysis shows that it was neo-Leninism that was compatible with Dengism and can be interpreted as its Soviet analogue. Within the neo-Leninist discourse, the Chinese reform model might have been applied in the Soviet Union. From this point of view, discursive factors enabled the Soviet leadership to implement Dengism.

4	Was the Chinese reform model implemented in the Soviet Union?
	Was Dengism a relevant model up to 1991?

The beginning of the reform process can be traced back to 1983 when Andropov gave consent to drafting comprehensive reforms and started to implement innovative policies including economic experiments and the establishment of the Politburo commission on economic reform, headed by Nikolai Ryzhkov. Andropov and other reform-minded actors wanted perestroika to go far beyond Kosygin's reform and neo-Stalinist perfection. It found expression in the acceleration strategy formulated in 1984. Gorbachev followed and radicalised this line, focusing on the acceleration of socioeconomic development, improvement of discipline and planning mechanisms, introduction of real khozraschet, that is, autonomy for enterprises, enhancement of welfare state, glasnost' and peaceful coexistence within the new political thinking. The implementation of link system and leasing, legalisation of individual labour activity, increase in the role of financial and market instruments, liberalisation of foreign trade, and support for cooperatives and joint ventures all had many coincident features with the Chinese model.

Despite side effects and mistakes, the neo-Leninist perestroika did not produce fatal problems. The evolutionary character of the acceleration strategy and neo-Leninist perestroika as a whole required long-term planning, political control, professional economic management inclusive of rigid fiscal and monetary policies, and many years for realisation, but Gorbachev and liberal socialists turned out to be dissatisfied with such a strategy. The general secretary clearly lacked sufficient political will to maintain this course. No later than in 1988, when the 19<sup>th</sup> CPSU Conference occurred, the two strongest discourses during the reform period, that is, neo-Leninism and liberal socialism, openly clashed, and the latter began to dominate as the general secretary was taking its side. The year 1988 can thus be considered a turning point of perestroika, entailing the power decline of the neo-Leninist discourse. Nevertheless, the first stage of perestroika was shaped by the neo-Leninist discourse and resembled Dengism. Neo-Leninism proved to be a Soviet parallel of Dengism and neo-Leninist, China-like perestroika was a historical reality.

Notwithstanding the hegemony of liberal socialism from 1988 on, neo-Leninism and respective actors did not give up. The influence of neo-Leninist discourse remained in economic and partially external policies where certain consensus and agreement between both discourses existed, which was enabled by discursive affinities. It can be demonstrated by the composition

of the new Ryzhkov's government appointed in July 1989 as well as the close cooperation and understanding between the prime minister and his deputy Leonid Abalkin. The government drafted a plan of a transition to market economy while preserving the limited role of central planning, state orders, and limitations of private ownership. The vision of a mixed economy or a socialist market economy was accompanied by the awareness of the need for strong, authoritarian state power and extraordinary measures. At that stage of development and despite differences in final goals, the combination of economic liberalisation and political authoritarianism was advocated not only by neo-Leninists, but also by some prominent liberal socialists including Abalkin, Chairman of the CPSU International Department Valentin Falin, and Politburo member Aleksandr Iakovlev.

The influence of neo-Leninism manifested itself in the increasing relevance of securitisation discourse. The latter addressed the need for countering political and media attacks against the Communist Party and the Soviet system as a whole, the introduction of extraordinary measures where necessary, including the use of the military, strengthening of the leading role of the Party, revision of some democratisation policies in both the political and economic field, and the decisive fight against nationalism, separatism, and extremism. This subdiscourse was institutionalised by the implementation of a strong presidential vertical in 1990, which provided the Soviet president with decisive political power. In addition, Gorbachev was granted extraordinary powers by the deputies. Neo-Leninist actors dominated the Security Council, an influential constitutional consultative body formed in late 1990. The establishment of the Cabinet of Ministers under Valentin Pavlov's leadership gave a new impetus to the neo-Leninist discourse. Pavlov followed Ryzhkov's reform programme that combined the market with planning and strong political authority. The decisive attempt to topple liberal socialism and restore the hegemony of neo-Leninism in all social fields occurred in August 1991. However, it failed. Regardless of this result, neo-Leninism as the Soviet analogue of Dengism remained relevant up to the last months of the existence of the Soviet Union.

### **Why was the Chinese reform model eventually dismissed?**

Perestroika under Gorbachev's leadership evolved from neo-Leninist reform to the liberal socialist reform, which got out of control due to "reform overstretch" and resulted in neoliberal transformation. The analysis shows that the Chinese reform model might have been

implemented in the country, and indeed was implemented at first. However, the Soviet leadership eventually left that path. Why?

The dissertation provides an explanation on three levels: discursive, institutional, and political. In discursive terms, neo-Leninism, which was compatible with Dengism in all main respects, was replaced by liberal socialism as a hegemonic discourse in 1988. Despite some similarities with Dengism, the liberal socialist discourse as a whole was incompatible with the Chinese reform model. After the general secretary gave up neo-Leninism, the institutional basis and political power of neo-Leninist actors deteriorated. The government, which tended to neo-Leninism traditionally, was inferior to the general secretary, Politburo, and the party apparatus, and subsequently the possibility of the rise in influence on the part of the government bodies was prevented by the establishment of the presidential system. Up until the August coup, the position and personality of the general secretary/president remained crucial to the detriment of the government.

Despite the pluralisation of the political landscape and strong centrifugal tendencies and processes, Gorbachev enjoyed wide support from the new parliamentary bodies, and most deputies were willing to follow the president. The problem was what I call Gorbachev's "strategic ambiguity". The supreme leader used to change his positions, complied with divergent interests, and maintained a high degree of uncertainty. This line enabled the coexistence of and rivalry between liberal socialism and neo-Leninism, leaving the possibility for the neo-Leninist discourse to restore its hegemony open. At the same time, Gorbachev's aversion to power politics and the use of force stimulated the rise of nationalism, separatism, organised crime, and the shadow economy. Neo-Leninist actors in the respective institutions starting from the government and ending with the Security Council and central security agencies were not able to halt the accelerating disintegration under such power and institutional constellations.

The explanation at the level of politics and individual actors ranges from subjective complexes to the weakness of political will and actorness. While Gorbachev suffered from the "Khrushchev and Novocherkassk complex", Ryzhkov from the "complex of the general secretary". The former entailed a mistrust in the party and state bureaucracy and fear of a possible "palace coup" paired with fear of social unrest and instability as a result of unpopular, especially financial, measures. The latter, in turn, maintained full obedience to the general secretary and was not able to resist him if necessary. Although Ryzhkov's successor Pavlov apparently had a stronger political will, he and his comrades from the GKChP failed at the decisive moment. Ligachev, who was perceived as an informal head of intraparty opposition after 1988, lacked sufficient popularity and

politico-ideological flexibility to reverse the dominance of liberal socialism. All these factors contrasted with El'tsin's vitality, assertivity, courage, and political will based on strong leadership and the ability to enforce his particular interests at any cost.

Populist, nationalist, and anti-Communist actors capitalised on democratisation, glasnost', and weak actorship on the part of the union's centre and eventually succeeded in filling the power vacuum while neo-Leninist actors failed to enforce their hegemony amid the turmoil. Carl Schmitt famously stated: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception."<sup>1362</sup> From this perspective, neo-Leninists decided on the exception during the crisis in August 1991, but surrendered immediately, pronouncing the judgement on themselves. Under those historical circumstances, the defeat of neo-Leninism entailed a defeat of liberal socialist perestroika as well. Soviet sovereignty vanished and the whole system imploded. New sovereignties, new hegemonies, and new discourses were born. In light of my research and its findings, the dismissal of Dengism by the Soviet leadership turns out to be one of the principal causes of the collapse of the first socialist country.

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<sup>1362</sup> Schmitt (2005), p. 5.

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## List of abbreviations

CC	Central Committee
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CDS	Critical discourse studies
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CER	Chinese Eastern Railway
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CoCom	Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls
CPD	Congress of People's Deputies
CPC	Communist Party of China
CP RSFSR	Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ETDZ	National Economic and Technological Development Zone
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross domestic product
GKChP	<i>Gosudarstvennyi komitet po chrezvychainomu polozheniiu</i> , State Committee on the State of Emergency
GLF	Great Leap Forward
GMD	Guomindang
GNP	Gross national product

GOELRO	<i>Gosudarstvennaia komissiiia po elektrifikatsii Rossii</i> , State Commission for Electrification of Russia
HIE	High-income economy
ICM	International Communist Movement
ID	International Department
IEMSS	Institute of the Economy of the World Socialist System
IMEMO	Institute of World Economy and International Relations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INION	Institute of Scientific Information on the Social Sciences
ISA	Ideological state apparatuses
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti, Committee for State Security
LIE	Low-income economy
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFN	Most favored nation
MIE	Middle-income economy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEP	New Economic Policy
NPC	National People's Congress
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SEZ	Special economic zone
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises

SOE	State-owned enterprise
TVEs	Township and village enterprises
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization